

S P E C I M E N S
O F
SERMONS AND PRAYERS,
O F A
L A T E D I V I N E,
F O R T H E
U S E O F T H E Y O U N G.

B Y
E D W A R D H A L L.

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1.

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Mr Hall returns comp
to Mr Palmer thanks him
for the tracts & has
sent him a copy of
the sermons & prayers
of which he begs his ac-
cceptance —

Whitby - Sept. 6. 1989

1.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T
TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE following Sermons and Prayers are a few specimens of a number of manuscripts of a late divine, which fell into my hands. I conceived, from the tenor of them, that they could not fail of being an acceptable present to most readers; and more particularly so to those who are young.

I trust the credit of the author of these productions will not materially suffer with even the judicious

dicious reader. All little inaccuracies of stile, and want of polish, which may chance to be observed in them, must, as faults, be attributed to me. My object in giving them to the public is, obviously not the hope of raising my own on the composer's reputation, but simply the hope of thereby doing good.

If I fail in this point, my having intended well will always be to me a source of sincere pleasure.

EDWARD HALL.

WHITLEY,
Near NORTH-SHIELDS.

S E R.

5.

S E R M O N S, &c.

S E R M O N I.

On the Power of Habit.

JEREMIAH, ch. xiii. v. 23.

*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?
then may ye also do good who are accustomed to do evil.*

THERE is not a more important power in human nature, or a power that deserves more attention, than the power of forming habits. What is a man indeed, take him for all in all, but a creature of habit? What is principle in him, unaided, or unsustained by habit? Habit has been called his second nature; but in fact, it is his nature itself. The character any one bears in society is hence alone determined. "If there be a motion that tends to vice in man, I affirm 'tis habit alone that gives it head and strength. Be it lying; note it, 'tis the ~~effect~~ of habit. Be it lust, revenge, ambition, covetings; be it whatever fault that may be named, 'tis habit in part, or all, or rather all."

My intention then, upon the present occasion, is to speak against its power; to trace its progress, and to expose its effects, when thus, or in any similar manner, it is found exhibited.

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The moral powers of man, peculiar as the province is in which they act, and the effect which they produce, are governed by laws analogous to those which pervade the bodily constitution of the species. Moral habits are, therefore, formed upon exactly similar principles, as physical or corporeal ones. Now it is well known that one of the first sources whence the latter of these arises, is *repetition*. If a man accustoms any limb or member of his body to a particular motion, that motion will grow habitual. It will cease to depend upon his volition, and become an almost mechanical effect. And the case is exactly the same which respect to the former. Let a man but frequently indulge any particular wish, or frequently give way to any particular appetite or inclination, and he will soon become, with respect to this matter, as it were, an involuntary agent.

Again, It has been observed with regard to bodily habits, that they are very often contracted, although man's feelings once greatly revolted against them. This is very apparent in a variety of foods, which, though extremely disagreeable at first, become, by habit, extremely agreeable. And so it is with our moral habits. From our native love of virtue, every man, at his first commission of any vicious act, must have felt something unpleasant. There is "a gall of bitterness" in it, for which, at the beginning, he cannot but have a disrelish. Let him, however, persist in it; and, like unfavoury herbs to the taste, it will become his longing, and he will thence-forward go on to commit iniquity with greediness.

Further, Few people are aware of the progress of their bodily habits. An awkward gait, a bad pronunciation, or an unseemly gesture, steals upon us in a quite imperceptible manner. It is exactly the same with the moral habits. One man, with all the best principles in the world, shall be observed becoming a drunkard, even though he is daily actually exclaiming against it, as a vulgarly vicious character, by a too continued indulgence in but the most trifling excesses: Another shall be remarked contracting a moroseness and acrimoniousness of temper, which at last ends in downright ferociousness of disposition, by the daily expression of but
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the most petty peevishnesses; to whom, if at any time the hint of such a possibility were given, he would indignantly ask, "What, is thy servant a dog?" Indeed the progress of habit is just like the progress of time, which advances from seconds to minutes, from minutes to hours, and from hours to a complete circle; but still so gradually, that the hand that marks its motion, shall not be perceived to stir, by the nicest and most accurate eye.

Further still. Bodily habits, it is universally acknowledged by all accurate observers of human nature, have frequently an early foundation indeed. The infant, while it reposes in the cradle, acquires that characteristic manner, or turn of feature, that continues to distinguish it through life. Nor is the case at all different with respect to its moral characteristics. The seeds of its future inclinations are very often imbibed with the milk by which it is cherished. Those indulgencies of its appetite, and those compliances with its forward humours, which are at the time regarded but as mere trifles, are too often the very "little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump."

Such, then, being the analogy between bodily bad, and morally vicious habits, it cannot be a matter of wonder that the latter should be full as rife in the world as the former: certain it is, that this is the case. Be it then now further my business to direct your attention to the state, and to describe the condition of such men as exhibit examples on this head.

In the first place, A man under the dominion of morally vicious habits, is in a state of slavery, that no other kind of slavery can possibly equal. Vicious habits, according to the sentiment of the prophet, "take away the heart." Every idea of independence is hereby destroyed. A man hence becomes, in the language of Scripture, the veriest servant of sin. One appetite says to him go, and he goes; another come, and he comes.—A Turkish sultan is but a faint image of a despot, compared to a passion that has long been accustomed to controul; and the meerest slave that even Africa has ever produced, has not less of voluntary agency, than a man who is entangled in the bond of iniquity.

Secondly,

Secondly, A man under the dominion of vicious habits, is in a state of subjection to the veriest of impositions.

Any Delilah may deprive such a one of his secret, and rob him of his strength. Any Philistines may accomplish against such a one any scheme that they wish. What has he, indeed, to withstand the attacks of the one, or to ward off the intrigues of the other? Though his resolution of doing what is right may be as sincere as possible; touch but the spring of his habit, and he will be sure to forget himself; with the dog he will return to his vomit. Of instances of this the world affords numerous examples. Enterprizes of great pith and moment, have hence had their currents turned awry. In profane history, many a mighty conqueror has, hence, been diverted to schemes quite foreign to his original purpose; and in sacred, the fate of kingdoms and of kings has, hence, been so totally changed, as to exhibit in the same æra, or in the same person, the most contradictory phenomena. It was, hence, that a well known great political character in our own age and nation, declared, that let him but be acquainted with a man, and he would be sure to find out his price; that is, he would be sure to find out his ruling passion or prevailing habit, which by a proper object being proposed to it, may always be operated upon with success. Indeed, it is truly wonderful, how wise and cunning men have turned this circumstance of man's subjection to his habits, to their own ends and purposes. Like beings of a superior rank, they have hence maintained a kind of sovereignty upon earth; playing upon their fellow men, as upon instruments of which they knew each stop; sounding them from the lowest note, to the top of their compass.

Thirdly, a man under the dominion of vicious habits, exhibits, if I may use the expression, the perfection of vice.

The most hopeless and abject state of degradation into which a man can be sunk, is certainly that in which his principles of conduct are determined, not by deliberate reflection, but by irresistible impulse; in which every opportunity he has is followed by such actions as are correspondent to the prevailing bias, opinion, or inclination; in which the dread of punishment is insufficient to deter him

him, and the slightest temptation instigates him to the most atrocious crimes; in which he goes after vice as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks. Now what is this but the state of the man who is habitually wicked? And if there be a spectacle that more than any other wounds the heart of sensibility, it is a spectacle of this description. The manacled slave; Lazarus licked by dogs; or Job scraping himself with potsherds, are objects infinitely less degrading to the dignity of humanity. And is such a character as this capable of being viewed only with hopeless commiseration? The text indeed tells us, that he is actually like the Ethiopian that cannot change his skin. But for the consolation of such as may be in the predicament described, be it understood, that nothing is more common in Scripture, than to make use of language expressive of an impossibility, when only a great difficulty is intended to be alledged. I might quote a variety of instances as proof; such as, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is impossible that those who were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, &c." And as then, it is not a doctrine of the Bible, that vicious habits cannot be subdued or changed, so neither is it a doctrine of fact, or of life. Indeed, the direct contrary may be shewn to be the case, by an appeal to what has a thousand times been observed.

There have been many men, who by intemperance, have brought themselves to the most deplorable of states; who have thereby been reduced to the very verge of the grave; but who, by a bold and steady purpose to abstain for a long time together from every irregularity to which they had been accustomed, have rescued themselves from the jaws of death, and have, as it were, been born again, and become new creatures.

There have been many who, by riotous living, having spent all their substance, have been obliged to submit to all the wretchedness of a prison; where, having taken up a manly resolution to retrieve and recover themselves, they have by the indefatigable labour and study of some years, in that uncomfortable retreat, mastered the know-

ledge and skill of one of the most difficult of professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent. Nay, some there have been, who, in the full career of a wicked course, have, by a sudden thought and resolution, (which the pious mind is ready to believe could have been raised in them but by the special grace of God) taken up instantly, and made an immediate change to a very exemplary degree of goodness and virtue.

Certain it is, that there is a great deal of true knowledge of human nature in that observation of a Greek philosopher; "Power and necessity are neighbours, and never dwell far asunder." When men are pressed by the urgency of their case; when nature is spurred and roused to the utmost, men discover in themselves that which they thought they had not; and find at last, that they can do that which at first they utterly despaired of ever being able to do.

Upon the presumption, then, of the above facts and observations, I mean to proceed to advise and exhort such as may be in the bond of vicious habits, to endeavour to break through them; recommending to them, at the same time, what may serve as aids and assistants to them in this truly laudable and interesting work.

In the first place, Let those who would wish to quit their vicious habits, convince themselves, in the most feeling manner, of the necessity they are under to relinquish them.

It is too common a thing with men in a vicious course, to stifle, instead of encouraging, the stings of conscience. They wish rather for opiates to lull themselves to sleep, than for any thing that would keep them awake to a sense of their danger. The truest sign, then, of a man's being in a fair way of recovery from the power of vice, is when he feels an inclination within himself to impress his mind with an encreasing abhorrence of it. The life of virtue may then be said to be in him; which, like the life of vegetation, will make a tree expand, though bound round with bars of iron, or inclosed between the fissures of the hardest rocks. When a man then, once feels this life, his victory is more than half ensured; he must burst his shackles, and regain his liberty. It is well known, that the insect, while in its torpid and insensible state,
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lies quietly enfolded in the web, which it's parent had formed around it ; but that as soon as the powers of animation begin to warm it, it instantly breaks it's bondage, and after creeping for a while, at last mounts into the air, apparently one of the freest and happiest of creatures. Go then to the fly, thou who art now involved in the web of vice ; consider its process, and learn exertion.

Secondly, Let not those who wish to subdue their vicious habits, be above using those means, which, from the frame of their natures, are evidently salutary to this end.

Some people are apt to conceive too highly of human nature. They are too fond of what is but the characteristic excellency of man. They are willing to consider themselves only as rational beings ; seem desirous of forgetting that they are compounded of any inferior principles ; and will not permit themselves to be treated, either by themselves, or by others, as creatures of any such mixed character. But whatever may be such persons' opinion of man, or whatever their conduct in consequence of their opinion, certain it is, that man is something more, or rather something less, than a mere rational animal. There is a great deal of what may be called mechanical in him. Upon this principle then it is, that a certain sect of Christians, much respected for their wisdom, and decency of deportment, in order to prevent their children from being addicted to angry emotions, impress upon them this maxim, " Never exalt your voices." Are there then any of you, here present, who are in the habits of indulging to excess your resentful passions, lifting up your voices in the streets, and throwing about your words, which are spears and arrows ? To your conviction of the impropriety of your behaviour, let me request of you to try the efficacy of the above maxim.

* A writer of no small eminence, in a philosophical survey of human nature, sets forth the influence of a practice of this or of a similar kind, in very descriptive terms. " In the mysterious frame of human nature," says he, " no circumstance is more wonderful to us as philosophers, or more interesting to us as Christians, than this which I am going to mention. The passion of anger, which, if it be once let loose from the restraint of

reason, rages with the fiercest violence, and hurries us into the most atrocious crimes, is beyond all others capable of controul in its first emotions. One resolute effort of reflection; a little change made in the mere features of the countenance; nay even a softer tone given to the voice, will stop the rising storm, which if it be suffered to gather all its strength, bears down before it the authority of every law, both divine and human, and makes shipwreck, in a fatal moment, of our reputation and tranquility for ever." And as upon these authorities you cannot but be willing to allow the efficacy of mere mechanical causes in the case of anger, it might as easily be shewn, and as substantially proved, that they are of equal use in the restraining every other passion to which we are subject. As then, it certainly will not happen to every Belshazzar whilst he is sitting at an impious feast, that a miraculous appearance of fingers writing upon the wall, should dash the cup from his lips; what can any man do better, who is mighty to drink strong drink, but who would wish to become temperate, than by the power of his own will or fancy, to endeavour ever to be presenting to his thoughts, something that may, in a similar manner, assail his attention? As it is not every slave of avarice, or ambition, to whom a dumb ass will speak, or whose advances in an evil rout, an angel with a drawn sword, will stop; if he is really desirous of becoming free from those domineering passions, let him not disdain to create for himself objects which may not less fail to call forth his exertions. And for the further encouragement of all, who may be in any respect the unwilling servants of sin, not to be above even employing this kind of means to further their redemption, be it known, that one of the most amiable of the Roman emperors, in theory was convinced of its usefulness, and by his conduct irrefragably proved it. Titus, he who lamented that he had lost a day because he could not recollect any good he had done, this Titus, for fear, lest he should forget the duties of his nature, and his station, had a person continually near him, whose business it was, to be every now and then saying to him, "Remember, thou art a man."

Thirdly, Whoever wishes to subdue the power of vicious habits, must lose no time in setting about the work.

"Oppose

“Oppose beginnings,” is an old and a wise adage, and peculiarly applicable to the case before us. For vice is, indeed, like a skilful invader, who either secures all the strong holds in the country of which he is making himself master, or induces all its inhabitants, as he advances, to take to him the oath of allegiance. Let vice then alone for a while ; and its tyranny becomes irresistible. That exertion which at first would have effectually stopped its progress, becomes totally of no avail. Seeing then this to be the case, can ye, whom Providence hath raised to the dignity of tuition, help feeling yourselves here particularly interested ? Can ye help feeling the propriety of the advice and the force of the sanction, “ Train up a child in the way he should go, because that when he is old he will not depart from it ?” Those parents, indeed, are hardly deserving of the name, who do not strive to regulate their children in the earliest stages of rationality. Those are the basest betrayers of their trust, who regard any the least vicious practice in them with unconcern. I would, I could impress it sufficiently deep upon the breast of every one of you to whom an offspring owes its birth, that there is not a single propensity in your child, if considered in its reference to the whole extent of its moral agency, that ought to be regarded by you as indifferent. It is the wisdom, and it is the duty then, of every one of you, to watch the opening minds of your children, and to exert all your most strenuous endeavours to nip each of their vicious inclinations in the bud. Oh do not trust to any skill or any power to eradicate evil dispositions, when they have once gotten root. Imitate, in this respect, the conduct of the inhabitants around the Nile, who, though dexterous to the highest degree, in destroying the crocodiles that infest its banks, are ever more solicitous to crush them in the egg, regarding, even with a kind of sacred veneration, the friendly ichneumon that assists them in the work.

Lastly, As a spur to excite you to break through the restraint of your vicious habits, think on the dignity and respectability of the characters who have vindicated themselves unto the freedom of virtue. Shall I search for examples ? Shall I ransack profane history for objects for your contemplation in the case ? Or shall I bid you be-

hold this or that man amongst your followers? Were I at any loss on this head, or did not a most perfect character in this respect now present itself to my mind, I might thus act. But when the Captain of my Salvation assails my attention; when a personage who was passions perfect master; who controuled every appetite with the most absolute sway; who was entirely ignorant of the power of any thing inclining to a vicious habit; who, exposed to every temptation that the world could promise, could coolly desire the tempter to get behind him; who, in the midst of insult, could hold his peace, and though smitten on the face, possess his soul in patience; who, under the severest tortures, could, with fervency, pray for the very wretches who were inflicting them; when, I say, such a character as this rises up before me, shut be the annals of Greece and Rome: lie concealed in the shade all the most renowned of their sages. Of Christ alone, I will say, "Behold the man! this, this is he whom ye who wish to be perfect, ought to aspire after copying." Oh learn of *him*, Christians, for he knew not, in himself, what it was to sin.

S E R M O N II.

The History of Samson.

JUDGES, ch. xiii. v. 24.

And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson.

THERE is certainly something very extraordinary, in the history of this person, to whom I have now called your attention. I know, indeed, of no collateral proof of its authenticity. For the reality of the existence of the person in question, we depend, I believe, entirely upon the authority of this book of Judges, in which we find his character and conduct delineated. We are here informed, that at the time Samson made his appearance in the world, the children of Israel had been subjected, for forty years together, to the oppression of the people called Philistines. Certain surprizing events announced his birth, and presaged his extraordinary character. His mother, at the time she conceived him, was considered as beyond the age of child-bearing; and an angel at two separate times arrested her attention, and gave her directions respecting the conduct it became her to maintain. In due course of time he was born; and his name was called Samson. Very early in life he gave intimations of his future spirit and temper. "The spirit of the Lord," saith the historian, "began to move him at times, in the camp at Dan." When grown up to man's estate, his great characteristical quality, which was mysteriously made by Providence to depend upon his continuing to be a Nazarite from the womb, was most wonderfully disclosed.

closed. He rent a lion, as it had been nothing in his hands ; he slew a thousand men with an instrument of offence that can scarcely be seriously named. At one time, he brake three green withs ; at another, two new cords ; and at a third, two new ropes, with which he was bound, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. He bore away upon his shoulders the two posts of the city gates, and went off with the pin of a web, and the beam into which seven locks of his hair had been woven.

Now these accounts may, at first sight, appear rather wonderful to some minds, and to have much of the air of fables and exaggeration. And indeed, it must be acknowledged, that an age of ignorance, is ever an age of wonders. At such times, mankind having no just ideas of the human powers, are apt, rather to represent what their fancy pictures to them, or what their inclination dictates to them to describe, than what they really know to be fact, or what they have received from indubitably authentic records. There is no absolute occasion, however, to imagine, that it was owing to the above causes, that the history of Samson made it's appearance in the world. Indeed, we have a variety of instances upon record, in much later ages, of strength, not much, if at all, less amazing, than those which are related of him. Many might be quoted by any man of reading, upon a moment's recollection. But of all the prodigies in this respect, of which we have any accounts, Maximin, the Roman emperor, is deserving of being reckoned the foremost. Whatever we are told, relative to him, is well attested ; his character is too exalted not to be thoroughly known ; and that very strength for which he was celebrated, was the very cause of his exaltation. He was by birth a Thracian, and from being a simple herdsman, rose through the gradations of office, until he came to be emperor of Rome. The circumstances that are told, says no less an historian than Mr. Gibbon, of his matchless strength, are almost incredible. He could move a loaded waggon, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hands, and tear up small trees by the roots. Had he lived, continues the same writer, in a less enlightened age, tradition and poetry might well have described him,

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as one of those monstrous giants whose supreme natural power was certainly exerted for the destruction of mankind. Such then being the fact, with respect to the existence of this emperor, in these, comparatively speaking, later times, is it not fair to urge it, as, at least, a presumptive argument, that his counterpart may have existed in more early days? Certainly, if Maximin ever had a being, of which there cannot be a doubt, there can be no grounds, on which the reality of the person whose history we are considering, can be disbelieved; at least, not from the nature of the facts which it relates.

But, be it then, that Samson was a man of the truly wonderful strength of body which his history here represents him, the view which the same history gives of the strength of his mind, we shall find, upon examination, to be just the reverse.

It is well known that the Jews held it, as perfectly unlawful for one of their nation to intermarry with Heathen Idolaters. Samson, however, no sooner saw a woman of Timnath, of the daughters of the Philistines, than he became insensible to the influence of this religious tenet of his people.

Not long after, being at Gaza, he gave another specimen of his total want of prudence, and of the power of moral self-government. Nothing but his more than natural bodily strength, saved him, at this time, from a plot, which his subjection to his passions, had given occasion to be laid against him. But the weakness of this man's mind is apparent, not only in his thus not having the power of moral self-government, but in his being besides, in consequence of this, the veriest dupe imaginable. There are in his history, repeated facts exhibiting him in this respect, in the most contemptible lights. Witness an insinuating person, robbing him of a secret, which, for his own credit, he ought never to have divulged. Witness another artful creature getting him to tell her all his heart, though he could not but be morally certain she meant to betray him. But, if we are desirous of seeing the full extent of the weakness of this man's mind, we must not stop here. We must look at him as expressing some of those savage passions to which humanity is sometimes subject.

I know not whether it is an observation made by any naturalists, or whether there are facts enough in the world upon which its truth may be supported, but the instance of Samson, and that of Maximin, whom I have mentioned above, would seem to intimate it, that a more than natural degree of muscular strength is, of course, attended with a more than natural degree of ferociousness of disposition. The soul of this Roman wonder was of the darkest and most sanguinary kind; his cruelty was unbounded and unrelenting. Upon a slight offence, nay, upon a bare suspicion without a witness, without a trial, or without an opportunity of defence, he put to death four thousand persons. Nor shall we find our Jewish prodigy much behind hand in this case. What direful instances of revenge are we not told that he practised? When he found, (to use the words of the story) that the men of the city had plowed with his heifer, and discovered his riddle, he hesitated not, but went down and slew thirty men, and by means of a trick as brutal, as it was resentful, burnt up the stocks and the standing corn, and the vineyards and the olives of the Philistines. When, in consequence of this behaviour of Samson, the Philistines retaliated upon the Timnite whose daughter Samson had married, burning him and his household together, he declared he would be revenged; and to make his resolution good, he instantly set about smiting them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.

There is still another more horrible instance of the ferociousness of this man's disposition, which I omit mentioning here, as I shall have occasion to enlarge upon it more fully in another part of this discourse.

But now, such being the character of Samson, it may be wondered at, perhaps, by some persons, how God should have employed him to be "the beginning of deliverance in Israel." But to this it may well be answered, that in the hands of God nothing is evil. He can make every thing the instrument of good. In the natural world he turns storms and tempests to the most salutary purposes; and in the moral, he causes the very vices and passions of men to work out his will. But to this it may be added, that the all-wise Deity ever apportions his means to the end he has in view. What did the state of the Jewish people at this time require?

Not a man of singular probity and virtue, but merely a man of might and of prowess, who should be able to make head against their enemies, and rouse them by the prospect of success, to vindicate themselves into that freedom, the loss of which they had for years been deploring. In these particulars then, Samson was certainly peculiarly endowed; and for the production of these ends, he was unquestionably singularly well-fitted. Indeed, there cannot be a doubt, but that if the children of Israel had the spirit properly to have employed the instrument which God thus put into their hands, they would by means of this man, have entirely freed themselves from the yoke of their oppressors. But their minds were so depressed by the long bondage in which they had been held, and they were become so mean and abject a people, that so far from aiding the man whom God seems thus to have sent them with every qualification necessary to be their deliverer, they, on the contrary, join with those who were tyrannizing over them, against him; endeavour to deliver him bound into the hands of the Philistines; meanly checking the ardour of his opposition upon his first successful attack upon them, by asking him in the true language of abject slavery, "what has thou done unto us, knowest thou not that the Philistines have the rule over us?" It is a remark confirmed by almost universal experience, that "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows." Now Samson affords an instance of the truth of this remark of the most brilliant kind. His historian observes, not only in the spirit of a truly pious, but of a truly philosophical mind, that Samson's father and mother knew not, "that it was of the Lord," that he fought an occasion against the Philistines.

Had but this been the case, and had the children of Israel, likewise, admitted the same idea into their thoughts; had but they viewed this man's conduct in the light in which they ought; had they but seconded him, instead of basely attempting to betray him, he would in all likelihood, have proved himself a very different character from what we find him exhibiting, and

have had a very different end from that which was his portion. He would, in all likelihood, have then been fired with the spirit of true glory; have had his mind fully engaged in furthering and promoting the rescue of his countrymen from oppression; so that instead of being the slave of low passions, his whole life might have remained unfulfilled, and his death have been the seal of his honour and his credit. But this not being the case, the conclusion of his history is as follows; "and it came to pass afterwards, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah."

Upon this woman, the lords of the Philistines prevailed to endeavour, by discovering wherein his great strength lay, to deliver him into their hands. "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, that he told her all his heart, and said unto her; there hath not come a razor upon mine head, for I have been a Nazarite from my mother's womb; if I be shaven, then will my strength go from me. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent for the lords of the Philistines, and, having made him sleep, she caused the hair of his head to be shaven off, and his strength went from him; so the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass, and he did grind in the prison house." And when the people of the Philistines saw him in this secure state, they praised their idol Dagon. And it came to pass, when they were merry, that they sent and called for Samson to make them sport by the exhibition of feats of strength, for his hair was beginning to grow again. For this purpose they introduced him into a large house, in which there were assembled above three thousand persons of all ranks and conditions. The dreadful idea of the deed by which he closed his being, came into his mind. Taking hold of the pillars upon which the house stood, and praying to his God for strength to avenge himself of the Philistines for his eyes, he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein.

Such, in brief, was the character, the life, and the death of Samson. To any mind capable of thinking, many important reflections must hereby be suggested.

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In the first place, the most obvious one that presents itself to the mind is, the superior excellency of mental endowments when compared with bodily perfections.

Our reason is, undoubtedly, the great source of all our superiority over the brute creation. Nay, it is the degree in which we are possessed of this faculty, that in fact, assigns us our station in the general scale of existence. It may well then be said of any amongst us, who have no pretensions to rival Samson in his strength, but who have a greater share of understanding than seems to have been his lot, that though we are not so much like Job's leviathan as he was, "Who esteemed iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood;" we are more like beings of a superior order. It was, certainly, a great mark of Solomon's natural good sense and just consideration of the state of human nature, even before he was particularly gifted by God, that omitting all other qualifications, he asked God to give him only wisdom; for, in the words of an apocryphal book, "though a man be ever so perfect amongst the children of men, yet, if wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded." It is this that lifteth up the head of him who is of low degree, and maketh him to sit amongst great men. The bee is little among such as fly, but her fruit is the chief of sweet things.

Secondly, Another obvious reflection in the present case is, how hazardous is the possession of extraordinary talents, when unaccompanied with virtuous self-government!

There are two sources of danger in this case; the one that the possession of extraordinary talents, of course, too generally leads to the abuse of them; and the other, that it often occasions us to become the objects against which machinations are formed. In the instance of Samson, we see specimens of both. Nay, we have examples of both in common life, much too numerous. I have known, saith a certain writer, many a man in society, the bane of the peace and good order of society, at the head of all disturbances, and the ring leader in all mobs and riots, from no other motive than a meer consciousness of great muscular strength. I have been witness to the bad effects of a man's having a body mighty to drink

drink strong drink, in his being hereby the cause of the absolute ruin of the health, fortune, and reputation of more than half his acquaintance. I have seen with grief (and with a sigh have said, how little do we know what is really estimable in this world!) many a parent going with his grey-hairs in sorrow to his grave; after praising that beauty in his child, which though long his boast and his glory, proved the very source of her fatal undoing, having been the cause why she became marked out for a victim of seduction. But, it is not merely the possession of bodily superiorities that are thus dangerous without the accompaniment of virtue, the same hazard is attendant upon mental ones. What worse member of society is there, than a man of brilliant wit, who has no restraints of moral feelings to check his satires, or to curb the wild luxuriencies of his vicious imagination? What more wretched plague to a nation needs there be, than a man possessed of great popular abilities, in a situation in life, in which he has the opportunity to use them, who is a stranger to principle? Such a one will be sure ever to be seen the foremost to oppose the measures of equitable government; the loudest to sound the horn of dissention; and the most eager in crying havoc, and in letting loose the dogs of contention. However flattering then it may be either for ourselves, or for our children to be possessed of extraordinary qualifications, either of body or mind, be it remembered, that the cultivation of them, without first laying the foundation of virtuous self-government, or entwining them together, is but as he who setteth and hatcheth cocatrice's eggs, not knowing that they will certainly tend to his hurt.

Thirdly, Another reflection that must strike every one from the consideration of the history before us is, the precarious tenure by which the highest accomplishments we can be possessed of, are held. Be it, that it is impossible for us at this time to say how, or to assign the reason why Samson's strength should have been made to depend upon what it did, the moral that every sensible mind may draw from his history is very obvious. Let a man only consider any single superior qualification either of his body or mind, it will for the most part be the same, and he will undoubtedly find, that his continuing

to enjoy it depends upon a circumstance equally as trivial as Samson's hair. A slight blow upon the head has reduced the finest genius in the world to a state of idiotism. A foot misplaced has ruined the most admired gracefulness of motion. The most trifling corroding of disease in a single feature of the face, has changed the most perfect beauty into the most hideous deformity.

An imperceptible derangement in the frame has, in an instant, rendered the most robust, the most weak and helpless objects imaginable. The plain consequence then, from these obvious facts is, "that favour is deceitful, and "that beauty is vain; that the wise man ought not to "glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his much "strength."

Fourthly, Another useful suggestion that must upon the present occasion, be called up in the minds of all thinking men is, the necessity every man is under, let his superiority be what it will, to watch against the approach of evil through little channels. It is astonishing how many men have been ruined from want of an attention to trifles. The whole happiness, well-being, and importance of their lives, have been destroyed from a neglect in this case. The fate of Samson, thus allegorically viewed, affords one of the finest lessons of morality. How many a young person may date the hour of his commencing drunkard, from the very first time that from the solicitations of companions, or other accidental causes, he indulged himself in what he thought would only be a temporary inebriation! His hair, to speak metaphorically, was hereby cut off; his strength to resist temptation was henceforward seen to fail him; and from that moment the Philistines of vice marked him out as a proper object of their attack, and made him, in due course of time, their wretched slave for ever. I might instance many similar effects in other cases in life; but they are so very numerous, and so very obvious, that it is unnecessary to point them out. A man of counsel will be ever considerate; do nothing without advice; not be confident in a plain way; go not wherein he may fall; turn from it and pass away. Happy alone is that man who thus feareth always.

Fifthly, Another important hint for the regulation,

and for the comfort of our being, is forcibly inculcated by the history of Samson, viz. the hiding as much as possible, any weakness of which we may be conscious, from those who may have an interest in finding it out. Samson was, as we have seen, the meanest slave, and most contemptible tool of the very worst of women. Governed by a passion, over which reason had no controul, he is in this case, an instance of humanity in its most degraded state. But despicable as his character in this respect was, its counterparts have frequently made their appearance since his days. Nothing, indeed, is more common, than to find men weakly disclosing to artful persons, even of their own sex, the very secret on which all their absolute free agency may be said to depend: Hence what thousands of silly dupes do we see shrewd and cunning men directing like puppets that are played with strings. Let all those then, who would wish to pass through life with credit and with comfort, learn from the example we are contemplating, this important lesson. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Sixthly, In the changes and revolutions in the state of Samson's situation in life, we have an affecting picture of the uncertainty to which human nature and human affairs are liable.

For twenty years this man was judge of Israel; was the highest in dignity and importance of the whole nation; was looked up to as a prodigy, and, like a petty god, walked about admired of all and dreaded. But mark his reverse. Deceived through the means of his own low passions, he fell into the hands of his enemies; his eyes were barbarously put out; he was confined to a dungeon, and obliged to work at a mill with the commonest slaves; and, if I may be allowed to use the familiarly, degrading term, he was brought forth to be a make sport to the very rabble of the Philistine people. Contemplate then, ye sons of frailty, this sad reverseful history, and be awake to the uncertainty of your condition. The richest and most powerful men among you, who live in your cieled houses, and who have now many good things laid up for your souls in store; may yet before you die, be brought to a morsel of bread, or waste years of your remaining existence

existence, in the loathsome confinement of a prison. I hint not this possibility, to give an alloy to your present comforts. I do not urge this, to fill you with vain apprehensions and idle fears: I do it from nobler motives, from a view of inspiring you with the virtues of piety and commiseration for those to whom these things have already actually happened, and to prepare you to meet them with fortitude, should it please the providence of God, to cause them to be your lot. In the words of the wise son of Syrach; "Boast not of thy cloathing
"and raiment, and exalt not thyself in the day of honour; for the works of the Lord are wonderful, and
"his works among men are hidden. Many kings
"have sat down upon the ground, and one that was
"never thought of hath worn the crown. Many mighty
"men have been greatly disgraced, and the honourable
"delivered into other men's hands. Call no man therefore, blessed, whilst he remains upon earth."

Lastly, in the dreadful manner in which Samson went out of the world, we are presented with a most frightful picture indeed, of the degree of savage ferocity to which human nature is capable of being carried.

We have heard of many men who have unhappily put an end to their own existence. We have heard of many more who have been violent instruments of the destruction of others whom they hated; but we have heard of none, or but of very few, who have at once been voluntarily the death of themselves and of their enemies together. Samson, in this respect, stands forth an almost unparalleled phenomenon. I will not exaggerate the fact. There are circumstances which forbid me pointing out the peculiar horrors of it. I will do what is more pleasing to my own feelings and my own fancy, and what, I trust, will be more edifying to you. I will contrast the character and conduct of this hero of Zorah, with those of the still greater hero of Nazareth; with those of Jesus Christ the hero of Christianity. I will thus shew you, that however Samson might be admired in the times in which he lived, his opposite alone can be an object of regard to the professors of the Gospel. Samson was the avowed enemy of the Philistines who did him no injury. Jesus Christ was the best friend of

the Jews who evil-intreated him. Samson went about committing all sorts of outrages, killing and destroying: Jesus Christ healing all manner of diseases, and bringing to life such as were dead. Samson's prayer, previous to his exit, was for strength to crush his persecutors: Jesus Christ's for pardon for his, at the hands of his merciful father. Samson died in the complicated act of suicide and revenge: Jesus Christ, with all the patience and meekness of a lamb, led to the slaughter. Samson, at his death, slew more than he did in his life; Jesus Christ at his, saved an universe from destruction.

S E R M O N III.

The Insanity of the Prodigal.

LUKE, ch. xv. v. 17.

And when he came to himself.

THESE words are part of the well-known parable of the prodigal son. And it would seem, from the trait which our Saviour here gives, of the unhappy youth who had spent all by riotous living, that his opinion was perfectly consonant with that Roman law, which considered the prodigal and the madman as the self-same character. For the expression, "when he came to himself," certainly implies, that 'till then he was not himself.

Let us, upon the present occasion, examine into the propriety of this idea.

In the first place, then, The prodigal and madman are properly considered as alike, inasmuch as they both seem to have a similar end in view.

It is well known that the madman is utterly regardless of consequences. He never thinks of any thing farther than what is before him. His whole object ever is, to accomplish the wish, that at the moment occupies his mind. And is not this exactly the conduct of the prodigal? Do not all his desires and prospects seem to centre in the present hour? Does he not, for this, sacrifice every thing valuable that he has? Does he not go on with his debaucheries, contrary to every dictate of prudence? Is he not perfectly blind to the approach of

poverty? Is he not entirely regardless of wretchedness, that stares him in the face? Does he not squander that substance, which, if he had a ray of reflection, he would be certain, he must live to regret? Is it possible, then, in this respect, to point out any thing like a difference in the two characters? Is there any appearance of a rational conduct in the one more than in the other? No. Justly has Solomon declared of such a one, that his beginning is folly, and his end mischievous ~~and~~ madness.

Secondly, The prodigal and madman are properly considered as alike, inasmuch, as they are equally incapable of governing themselves.

It very often happens that persons, actually mad, appear at intervals as composed and rational as it is possible to conceive; and, provided a particular subject is not started, no one would be sensible of their malady. But the moment this string is touched, they are no longer themselves; the paroxysm begins; and their minds are the seat of disorder and confusion. Nor is the case different with the man who is devoted to riotous living. Whilst his passions are uninflamed, or his appetites unprovoked, he is a very pattern of sobriety, and a very Anchorite of chastity. But the instant his blood is a little quickened, he is seized with a furor; he loses all command of himself; he hastens, like the dog to his vomit, and like the sow to her wallowing in the mire.

Thirdly, The prodigal and madman are properly considered as alike, inasmuch, as their appearance and deportment are exceedingly similar.

Is there a violence which folly, which phrensy can have committed, of which the midnight reveller has not frequently been guilty? Hark, how horrid his imprecations! Can the maniac utter worse? Observe his disordered visage; his dishevelled hair; his deranged habit. Can madness itself exhibit a spectacle more shocking? Mark his hurried steps; his frantic gestures. Can the inhabitant of Bedlam shew any thing more extravagant? Indeed so strong is, and always has been, the similarity in this respect between these two characters, that in the heathen mythology, the worshippers of Bacchus are all represented, as possessed with a sacred fury, and their mode of comporting themselves, as all wildness and disorder.

disorder. They did homage to their deity, by the most tumultuous cries, and adored him by antics well expressive of insanity. And those, in the present time, who, metaphorically speaking, still do honour to the same God, are in general very orthodox in the mode of their worshipping him.

Fourthly, The prodigal and madman are naturally considered as alike, inasmuch, as they both exhibit a melancholy instance of humanity.

Perhaps, of all the dismal sights of woe, that of a creature deprived of reason, is the most affecting. There is such a mixture of horror and regret in the feeling that it occasions, as absolutely harrows up the very soul of sensibility. But touching as it is, there is something in the debauchee almost equally so. Come hither ye advocates for the dignity of the human kind, come hither, and behold an humiliating example of the noblest work of God in this world. Behold a man, not by the disease of his brain, not by the stroke of Providence, but by his own volutary act, transformed into a madman. Behold his lamp of reason, extinguished by himself. Behold his senses all distraction and disorder. See how he looks, he acts, he speaks, he knows not what. Lo! his erect attitude, his expressive countenance, his penetrating genius, that image of God within him, all sunk in the nauseous draughts of intoxication. See him the mere wreck of humanity; a miserable satire upon his species; a heart-rending spectacle of the depravity to which we are subject. It is impossible to contemplate such a character as this, without the liveliest emotions of sorrow. Tears like those our Saviour shed, when he saw Jerusalem immersed in wickedness, involuntarily burst from the feeling mind.

Lastly, The prodigal and madman are properly considered as alike, inasmuch, as they are oftentimes their own murderers.

Self-destruction has ever been considered as the very height of insanity. Yet, even in this respect, debauchery is not exceeded by lunacy itself. It differs only in the slowness of its operations, and the instruments it makes use of. For in the words of a well-known writer, "the loathsome rottenness of foul disease from
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raging riot, are messengers of death as fell, as certain, as the fatal ball, the strangling cord, or suffocating stream." Indeed, there are numberless instances in life, where the former are as plainly to be seen taking place, as the latter. Nay, there is scarcely an intemperate man who, if, upon his untimely end, a jury were impannelled, might not, with the utmost justice, be considered as actually guilty of *felo de se*.

But now, bad as the portrait may be, which we have here drawn of the prodigal, it is not impossible, from the instance in our text, but that he may come to himself.

There is a variety of causes that may well be supposed as bringing about this effect.

In the first place, The distresses, which are the natural consequences of his folly and wickedness, may occasion this.

Various and dreadful, indeed, are the ravages of debauchery and prodigality. It is impossible for any one, long to continue in the practice of them, without feeling their direful effects. Fortune, reputation, health, or substantial good must, one or all, inevitably fall a sacrifice. And hence it is, that we see numbers brought to reflection, who otherwise, perhaps, would never have come to themselves. A place amongst the Lazars in an hospital, which is no uncommon revolution, has restored many a gay libertine to his reason. The importunities of a merciless creditor, threatening him with all the horrors of a prison, have filled with anxiety the breast of him who never awoke but to a joyful morning. The extremities of hunger, calling up the wish even for the husks that the swine did eat, have made him, who never thought before, fully sensible of his folly and imprudence. Indeed, such changes in life as these, have generally been found, very successful preachers of wisdom. They are medicines that have wrought cures even upon those, who, as to any thing else having an effect upon them, might justly have been ranked amongst the incurables.

Secondly, The fatal end of a friend or acquaintance, has often been known to cause a man to come to himself.

One would think that such an event should, in all cases, be found effectual. But alas! it is very far from having that general influence which might be expected. There are many instances, in which the drunkard sees his associate absolutely falling an almost instantaneous victim, to the very debauch, in which he himself was engaged, and yet continues his vicious pursuits, with as much eagerness as ever. There are many instances, in which the spendthrift is witness to the distress of a comrade, who has a little outstripped him in the madness of his career, who still maintains a conduct which must inevitably end in a similar issue. This, however, testifies a degree of insanity, equalled only by him, who perceiving his companion a little advanced before him, sinking in a quagmire, persists to keep on in the same path, though absolute perdition awaits his very next step.

Thirdly, Some accidental unexpected circumstance is oftentimes known to cause a man to come to himself.

The apt quotation of an expression from the Psalms, by one of the Apostles, once caused a whole assembly to be pricked at the heart, and to cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?—And St. Paul *reasoning* of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, made Felix tremble. The soul of David was wrung with anguish for the murder of Uriah, by the parable of Nathan; and the ten sons of Jacob were brought to a sense of their guilt, in the selling of their brother, only by Joseph's commanding them to fetch Benjamin unto him. The *look* of Jesus was enough to bring Peter to himself; and the *crowing* of the cock forced from him the bitterest tears of repentance.

Lastly, The efforts of the mind itself have oftentimes been known to produce this effect.

The soul of man always militates against the bondage of sin. It is kept bent like the bow, only by the strong cord of passion. It is perpetually striving to break its chains and recover its influence and authority. In order to accomplish this, it practices a variety of arts; it oftentimes haunts men in dreams, and terrifies them through visions. It oftentimes turns to shape the form of things unreal, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. Such tricks hath guilt struck fancy. It oftentimes, in the language of Scripture, makes
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makes them to imagine strange things. Hence it is, that many men in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, have been led to imagine that they have been visited by ghosts and apparitions, have supposed some special messenger dispatched from heaven to warn them of their danger, and to fill them with due fears respecting the horror of their condition, when alas! it was conscience alone, that like the troubled sea, is perpetually casting up mire and dirt. Hence the impious Belshazzar thought he saw the fingers of a man's hand upon the wall, and his knees smote together; and the wicked Balaam, who for lucre wished for leave to curse the chosen of God, fancied he saw an angel with a drawn sword, standing in the way. Hence, in more modern times, one noted reprobate, whose life has been given to the world, dated his repentance from the appearing of his Saviour to him by night; and another, well known for his crimes and debaucheries, declared he was brought to a sense of his misconduct, by the address of a spirit.

But whatever be the cause that brings wickedness to itself; be it the mind itself, or any thing foreign thereto, let us imagine the moment arrived.

In the first place, It is a moment of distraction and confusion.

There is scarcely a condition of being that can well be conceived more harrassing, than that of a man just reduced to a sense of his misconduct. All alive to the madness and danger of the career in which he has been engaged, he starts within himself; he is doubtful what to do; he is all hesitation and fear; his faculties are confused; his will is as it were fascinated; he is just like a man who walking in his sleep, awakes, at the instant he is got to the edge of a precipice, when the horror of his situation so affects him, that he has not power to withdraw, but stands trembling upon the brink of destruction, stupified with fear.

Secondly, It is a moment of dreadful regret.

There are few of the blessings of life that we sufficiently value whilst we have them; but the instant they are placed beyond our favour, their worth seems to be increased ten-fold. Thus we take no note of time, but from its loss. We prize health, only when racked with
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disease. We lament the means of subsistence and enjoyment, only when they have taken to themselves wings and flown away. But then these are seasons of very aggravated affliction, when they come. We experience a sad addition to the actual evil that we suffer, from the reflection of the good that we have lost. "How many *hired servants* of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger," ⁱⁿ was the regretful language of the unhappy prodigal. ~~the~~ the prodigal. It was not enough, that he felt the effects of his imprudence, in the absolute want of food; but the idea that he had degraded himself, even below those, who once were far his inferiors, cut him to the quick. But if the prodigal feels pain, even from the view of those, in the less eligible situations in life, what must be his sensations, when he casts an eye on those in the more easy and respectable conditions? When he looks up to men with whom he was once upon an equality, who are honoured, caressed, esteemed, and enjoying all the comforts of being, whilst he himself is an outcast in society, shunned by every virtuous and worthy character, and distressed to support himself, even in the gratification of his low debaucheries. Indeed, indeed, the condition of such an one is truly mortifying. He is just like the devil, where the poet represents him as not being able to bear the sight of the sun, "because it brought to his remembrance from what state he fell;" or where, when in the person of the cherub, "virtue in herself how lovely," was offered to his view, he describes him as seeing and pining for his loss.

Thirdly, It is a moment of the bitterest self-contempt.

There is nothing that sinks a man lower, than debauchery. It is a stupifier of all his faculties. It is an enemy to every thing laudable and excellent. It is a hindrance to every advancement and improvement. In short, it makes a man a mere brute. No wonder, then, that he who is a slave to it, when he is awakened to reflection, should feel an abhorrence of himself. No wonder that he should be rendered one of the most miserable of mankind. You know not, perhaps, any of you my young friends, what it is to despise your-

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selves. Then you know not, be assured, one of the worst evils "that flesh is heir to." Happy, thrice happy, in your ignorance, strive with all your might to continue so. For oh! it is a feeling, of all others, the most hateful, a feeling that no jollity can dissipate, no secrecy hide us from. In a word, it is a feeling, like that which Cain experienced, when he cried out in an agony, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Lastly, It is a moment of lowness and depression.

There is something, in a vicious conduct, under which the mind, when brought to reflection, cannot support itself. All its fortitude and strength forsakes it: and be it of never so resolute a species, it expresses its feelings in the most dejected manner. Hence, the prodigal, in the moment that he comes to himself, is oftentimes seen to exhibit a most affecting spectacle, to the view of sympathy and sensibility. Mark what anguish seems to harrow up his soul! What a look of distraction and disorder distorts his visage! How he tears his hair! How he beats his breast! His eyes how they stream with tears! His hands how they are wrung in sign of bitter woe! Lo! how he refuses food! How he avoids society! How he rejects consolation! See, he is prostrate on the ground. Harken to his language. "God be merciful to me a sinner." What, ye feeling breasts, shall we stop his sighs? Shall we interrupt his reflections? No. Let us aid, let us animate, let us encourage them. In the words of the apostle, "let us rejoice in that he is made sorry; for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."

But it is with grief that I am obliged to observe, that this is not the happy effect, of the sorrow, that every prodigal experiences, when he comes to himself. There are some, alas! whose hour of reason arrives so late, that like a flash of lightning to a benighted traveller, it serves but to shew them the horror of their situation. Of this number we may,

In the first place, Reckon those who come to themselves when they have it not in their power to atone for their misconduct.

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In what a course of riot and intemperance is not that thoughtless youth engaged? See how he sacrifices health and fortune, honour and conscience, to his vicious debaucheries! See him the companion of the most worthless and contemptible of mankind; the friend of the drunkard; the supporter of the harlot; and the dupe of the gamester. Observe the anguish he occasions to an affectionate parent; whose frame, enfeebled by age, is disordered by sorrow. See, the misconduct of his child has increased his infirmities; his life is despaired of; the fatal news is carried to his son, not totally devoid of feeling; his reflection is arrested; the horror of his baseness pricks him at the soul; he hastens to express his contrition and repentance. But ah! his father is no more; he has not even the consolation of parental forgiveness. What a moment then is this! What a coming to himself is here! How dreadfully affecting! How justly alarming to every son of debauchery. A hell is unnecessary for the punishment of such a character; for, in the words of the poet, "himself is hell."

Secondly, In the number of those who come too late to themselves, are those who are sensible of their misconduct, when their habits are such that they cannot overcome them.

There is many a one in the world, who is the involuntary slave of sinful indulgence. He feels the galling chain, but he cannot break it. He has suffered sensuality to gain such an ascendancy over him, that 'tis in vain that he sees and knows its baneful effects. His life is, therefore, nothing but a succession of brutal gratifications, and dreadful self-reproaches. The midnight debauch and the morning depression, are as constant as the following of light and darkness. But, as we may well suppose, this cannot but be a state of extreme wretchedness and uneasiness. Indeed, so distressing is it in general, that those who are in it can scarcely muster patience enough, even to support their character 'till life's play is over.

"Scarce did I say? Some cannot do it.

"Oft their own daring hands the curtain draw

"And shew us what they feel, by their despair."

Thirdly, In the number of those who come too late to themselves, are such as are sensible of their misconduct just when life is departing.

"Oh, conscience! into what an abyss of fears and horrors dost thou drive those who are thus circumstanced! Ah, that I had served my God as I have served my king, or rather my own ambitious views," cried a well-known prelate, and died a few moments after in all the agonies of terror and remorse.

Indeed, my young friends, no words can paint the anguish of a man, who awakes to reflection, but at the moment he is upon the precipice of eternity. Does he look forward, every thing is darkness and despondency. Does he look backward, but for a few memorials of infamy and guilt, his life is a perfect vacancy. Which way then shall he fly infinite wrath and infinite despair? Whichever way he flies, he finds nothing but misery awaiting him. His state is just like that of the wretched lord, who, harrassed with his guilt, and speechless by his disorder, when desired to move his hand, as a token to his friends, that he felt some small degree of comfort, died, and gave no sign of hope in heaven's mercy.

Lastly, In the number of those who come too late to themselves, are those who are sensible of their misconduct, only when in hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments.

There are some men, who pass through life without ever once being brought to a state of reflection. They are taken off with all their vices blossoming around them. They step into eternity, from the chamber of riot. They are this moment mad with wine, the next where hope never cometh, that comes to all. It is in vain to attempt to describe what must be the feelings of a man, to whom this tremendous change arrives. They must be such as it cannot enter into the heart of man to conceive; such as no man could even have represented to him and live. Like the sight of Jehovah upon the mount, the very portrait of them would be instant death: the powers of humanity, in their present state, would sink under its horrors.

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To conclude. Come then, oh, young men! and let us reason together. Is it worth your while, for the pleasure of beholding the wine when it sparkles in the glass, to run the risk of the woe that it will assuredly occasion you? Is it worth your while for the mad riot of debauchery, to run the risk of the dart that will certainly strike through your liver? Is it worth your while for the sake of appearing a little time, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, to run the risk of many years of sackcloth and want? Is it, in short, worth your while for the sake of rejoicing in your youth, to run the risk of being thus called to judgment by your God? Oh, surely not. Come then, to day, while it is called to day; while the door of reformation is not shut, break off your sins by repentance; turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon you; pray unto him and he will abundantly pardon. Assure yourselves there is "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Come then, have the ambition of giving pleasure to the celestial regions. Let humanity have a victory over the enemy of its nature. Beat down Satan under your feet. Be men, whilst you remain in this world, that you may pass through it without the forfeiture of reason; be enabled to leave it with comfort; and in the world to come, be as the angels of heaven.

S E R M O N IV.

On the Inconsistency of Mens Expectations.

LUKE ch. vi. v. 44.

Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes.

MOST of the unhappiness of life arises from the the absurdity and folly of mens wishes and expectations, rather than from any positive and unavoidable evils to which humanity is subject. And this is the true source of the greatest part of those censures against the dispositions of Providence, which we are perpetually hearing. This is a matter of fact, which the conduct of multitudes, in almost every possible view of it, fully authenticates. Consider them with respect to their goods; their situations; their behaviour to their fellow men; or as influenced by their state and condition; they will be found, in all, unreasonable and inconsistent characters.

To begin with the first; viz. to consider them with respect to their goods.

First, then, What is the conduct of numbers as to health?

There are none who are not ready to acknowledge it as the best and the greatest of goods; without which enjoyment is a stranger and life is a burden. When lost, there is nothing to which men are not willing to have recourse, in order to regain it. The nauseous draught of the physician, and the painful operation
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of the surgeon, are both submitted to, not merely with resignation, but oftentimes with a kind of eagerness. Now one would think, that a blessing thus highly valued, and a comfort for the recovery of which men do not scruple to give such a price, should be watched with care, should be kept as the apple of the eye. But alas! the case is far otherwise. Who is there amongst us who does not frequently sacrifice it, for the enjoyment of an hour? The assemblies of jollity, and places of public entertainment, what do they exhibit but examples of strength wasting in riot, and beauty withering in irregularity? Indeed, you can scarcely enter a family where you do not find part groaning in repentance of past intemperance, part admitting disease by negligence, and part soliciting it by luxury.

Secondly, What is the conduct of numbers with respect to knowledge?

'Tis a pearl of great price. 'Tis a tempting ornament of grace, that all wish much to wear. All not possessed of it, mourn its want in a most lamentable strain. And why? are any necessitated to be ignorant? Has wisdom refused to take any by the hand? No. But they do not like to enter upon the crooked paths, through which, as they are informed by the wise son of Syrach, she will lead them, and bring fear and dread upon them. The toil of study is what they cannot submit to. They love not the smell of the midnight lamp. They are like persons at a mart, who, though longing for a commodity, may be seen turning away from it with regret, muttering, "the price, the price!"

Thirdly, What is the conduct of numbers with respect to plenty or opulence.

We see the whole world put in motion by the wish for riches, and the dread for poverty. Here then, surely, there can, possibly, be nothing irregular in the conduct of any. Every thing, certainly, that would destroy what all are thus labouring to acquire, must universally be avoided. By no means. Is there a person, do you think, in the world, who does not know, that if he spends more than he receives, he shall in time become indigent? Certainly not. 'Tis, you will say,
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a self-evident truth. But take up the weekly list of bankruptcies. It exhibits instances of men, who have acted as if the reverse of this axiom was fact. Take notice of the thousands, not yet arrived at the goal of ruin, but who are hurrying towards it as fast as possible. Can any thing be more in opposition to it than their conduct. Indeed, the inconsistency between the knowledge and practice of such characters as these, is not less, than that of a man who walks into a pit with his eyes open, or steps over a precipice in broad day-light.

But if there are numbers of men thus inconsistent with themselves, with respect to the goods of life; let us consider the conduct of others with respect to their situations.

First, Harken to the murmurs and complaints on account of the variation of the weather. What lamentations because our atmosphere has nothing stable nor certain in it! But how absurd are these repinings? Can other be expected in a clime that is temperate? If nought will content you but a cloudless sky; go, and be sunburnt within the tropics. If nought will suffice you but a constancy of season; away! be unbraced and relaxed with the inhabitants of the Line.

Secondly, What clamours strike our ears respecting the badness of our policy, and the licentiousness of our people? What numbers adopting the language, that such and such a thing would not be borne in another country! That a man would be put into the Bastile or the Inquisition, if he dared to say or act what he does here! All this may be very true. But the persons who make these complaints, ought to reflect, that he who will have a fire to warm and cheer him, must, now and then, be content to have his eyes hurt with the smoke, and his linen sometimes befouled with the blacks. If you cannot bear to experience the least insolence from a mob; hasten, and put yourself under the protection of the Turkish Janissaries. If you are hurt, beyond sufferance, to see the sacred tenets of your faith rudely attacked by an infidel scribbler; tempt your author with you to Spain. There you may
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make him the subject of an *Auto de fé*; and, in your turn, perhaps, become one yourself.

Thirdly, What uneasiness do numbers express at the inconveniences of their particular stations and employments! How hard is it, cries one, that I have no time to read; no opportunity to improve my mind! I cannot enjoy any of the pleasures of life. "I am obliged to sit at the anvil considering the iron; and my flesh the vapour of the fire consumeth; and I fight with the heat of the furnace. In my ears is ever the noise of the hammer; and my eye looketh continually upon the pattern of the thing that I make."

But why is he obliged to be all this? Because his whole soul is set upon being rich. His uneasiness is the mere imposition of his fancy; any pleasure besides the pleasure of gain, would be to him but as music to a deaf man; and any book but the book that teaches him how to perfect his work, and to secure its profits, would make no more impression upon him, than his beholding himself in the glass. He would straightway forget what manner of man he was.

But farther; numbers are not only thus inconsistent with respect to their goods, and their situations, but with respect also to their behaviour to their fellow men.

First, Every one will allow, that it is absurd to expect, in any description of beings, what cannot reasonably be looked for from their abilities.

That we cannot all do all things, is an axiom which has been assented to ever since the days that axioms were first formed. But, however, there are some men who actually appear not to give it credit. A child is guilty of a folly or an indiscretion. And what more natural? His father is in a storm of passion; he wonders at its conduct: nay, perhaps, uses the rod. But to what can we resemble such a man, unless to that madman of a prince, who scourged the sea, because when agitated by winds, it had, of necessity, destroyed his bridge of boats; or to the fool who expected to find in the blade, just springing up from the ground, a full ripe ear. A servant is sent upon a message. 'Tis at some distance: his return therefore necessarily delayed. Observe the conduct

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and deportment of his master. He is frantic through impatience. You would think that with his message he had given his servant the wings of the dove. Or, that like the poets, he actually had the power of annihilating both time and space. A man of taste and sentiment, well versed in all the set phrase of speech, has occasion to hold converse with one of a different order. He is quite hurt by the brutality and sluggishness of his conceptions and expressions. One would be apt to conclude from his conduct, that he really imagined men would be hewers of wood and drawers of water, with a cultivated genius, and a great refinement and delicacy in their moral feelings; and that this question of the wise son of Syrach did not contain an absolute impossibility; "How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plow; that glorieth in the goad, and whose talk is of bullocks?"

Secondly, Nothing is more unreasonable than to expect every thing on the part of others, and nothing on our own. Yet nothing in life is more common. A man contracted and comfortless as the northern blast, expects the partner of his life to be all happiness and affection. But surely such an one should reflect, that the flowers never open but when the sun shines.

A cross ill-tempered creature mixes with society. Confusion, rioting, and quarrelling, disgrace the company with whom he associates. Hark! he is the loudest in his complaints on its account. Would that it could be inculcated upon him, that a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump.

A man who could not keep his own secret, but communicated it to another, is displeased, because he finds that it is spread abroad in the world: when, alas! any man at all acquainted with human life well knows, that a thing of this nature is like Noah's raven, which when once let forth out of the window of the ark, kept continually flying from one place to another, without resting any where.

Thirdly, Every one knows that light and darkness cannot exist at one and the same time. The desires and expectations, however, of numbers of men in the world,

world, with respect to what they look to find in their fellow creatures, are as absurd as the reverse of this obvious fact. They feel, for instance, their affection drawn forth by some particular excellence in this or that character, and they instantly conclude him perfect in all points; they make him, as it were, the very god of their idolatry, and are not less shocked when they come to discover their delusion, (which it is impossible they should not do soon) than the Philistines of old were when they found their dagon fallen down before the ark of the Lord; or than the priests of Baal were, when the prophet proved to them that their god was a mere block, without either power to hear their petitions, or influence to accomplish their wishes. It must be from pure want of reflection, that men fall into the absurdity abovementioned. For nothing is more obviously true than what an amiable elegant female here has observed, "that models of absolute perfection are only to be met with in romance; where exquisite beauty, and brilliant wit, and profound judgment, and immaculate virtue are all blended together to adorn some favourite character. For, as the race cannot have the strength of the draught horse; and as winged men, griffins, and mermaids, must be mere creatures of the imagination, so there are combinations of moral qualities, which never can take place but in idea. There is a different air and complexion in characters, as well as in faces, though, perhaps, equally beautiful; and the excellencies of one cannot be transferred to the other. Thus, if one man possesses a stoical apathy of soul, acts independently of the opinion of the world, and fulfils every duty with mathematical exactness, you must not expect that man to be greatly influenced by the weakness of pity, or the partialities of friendship; you must not be offended that he does not fly to meet you after a short absence; or require from him the convivial spirit and honest effusions of a warm, open, susceptible heart. If another is remarkable for a lively active zeal, inflexible integrity, a strong indignation against vice, and freedom in reproofing it, he will probably have some little bluntness in his address, not altogether suitable

44 *On the Inconsistency of Mens Expectations.*

to polished life; he will want the winning arts of conversation; he will disgust by a kind of haughtiness and negligence in his manner, and often hurt the delicacy of his acquaintance with harsh and disagreeable truths.

But further; the inconsistency of the conduct of a great part of the world is not confined even to their goods; their situations; their behaviour to their fellow men; but is notoriously conspicuous even with respect to the influence that their state and condition should have upon themselves.

First, Providence has fixed the limits of human enjoyments by immoveable boundaries; and has set different gratifications at such a distance from each other, that no art or power can bring them together. You are then a glutton? rest contented with your brutal pleasures. You shall never taste the delights of fancy, or of a brisk flow of soul. You shall ever be a heavy stupid fellow. You are a debauchee? When the sow forgets to wallow in mire, you shall then know the sweets that arise from an union of sentiment and affection. You are a man devoted to rising early and taking rest late, and eating the bread of carefulness? When the sun shall stand still again upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, then shall you relish that tranquility, which thou now vainly promisest to thyself, as the end of thy labours; and shalt not haste to go down to them for a whole day.

But, fellow christians, seeing that none of those things can come to pass, let it be our endeavour not to waste life in attempting to make contradictions consistent, to combine opposite qualities, and to unite things which the nature of their being must always keep asunder.

Secondly, It has always been a difficult thing with naturalists to point out a real specific characteristic of any particular animal, that is applicable to no other whatsoever of the same genus. A certain ancient poet, however, seems to have succeeded remarkably well in this matter, with respect to man, whom he has described as "an animal of short life and long hopes." For, is there one amongst us who does not himself
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feel the justness of this definition? Or, at least, is there one who is not fully convinced of its propriety, from the conduct of thousands of their fellow creatures? Take notice of that deep calculator of events. See through what a vast succession of years he traces the effects of what he is to do to day. See how the probable consequences of his present conduct, half a century to come, arrest his attention, affect his hopes, or incite his alarms. Vain trifler! Had he lived before the flood, he might have been considered as a man of some genius and discretion. View that eager animated spirit. See how he is fired with the prospect before him. See him mounting, eagle-like, directly up towards the very sun of his hopes. But lo! the arrow of death pierces him in his flight. He falls in full wing.

Behold that grand projector. What a stupendous scheme has he not planned! Mark with what a pride he imagines he sees it already in perfection. See how he fancies his name immortalized. Short-sighted self-flatterer! Thy life; the mighty Atlas, on which all thy fond expectations are built, is laid low in the dust, ere the first story of thy airy castle is completed.

Thirdly, The idea of any thing like equivocal production is now universally scouted by all philosophers. No seed, no fruit, is now one of the first axioms of natural history. But it would seem that some men think it will hold good when analogically applied to the moral world. At least, their conduct is strangely inconsistent with the supposition that it will.

A man, for instance, is miserably poor. He keeps up his spirits with the thought that "no one knows what there may be for him in the womb of futurity." True: if he uses industry, skill, and discretion: but if he does not, the self-evident truth, that from nothing nothing can come, will certainly be apparent in his fate.

Another is overwhelmed with grief for some cause or other. He comforts himself, or he is comforted by his friends, with the observation, "that *time* will cure him." Very true: if he uses reflection, or other
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proper instruments of consolation. But as for talking of *time*, purely of itself, doing any thing, you might as well talk of the air's breeding insects, or of the wind's causing an animal to be ~~heart-sick~~ *prolific*.

But not to multiply instances: Solomon's observation, that he that soweth vanity, shall reap also vanity, will undoubtedly be found to hold good in all possible cases.

Lastly, It may be observed in general, that the future is purchased by the present. It is not possible to secure distant and permanent happiness, but by the forbearance of some immediate gratification. This is a truth, however, by which it is a very difficult matter to get a great many men to act. 'Tis next to an impossibility to persuade them, that there is any thing incongruous in a man cloathed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, being carried up, in due time, by the angels, into Abraham's bosom. Their language therefore to one another, always is, with the worldly minded in the book of wisdom, "Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments; and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place, for this is our portion and our lot." But, fellow Christians, do you not tremble for the awful manner in which these persons will be made sensible of the inconsistency and absurdity of their behaviour? When in hell, being in torments, and crying for mercy, it shall be replied to them, "Remember, that ye, in your life time, have had your good things, and therefore ———." But the inference is too obvious to need pointing out.

To conclude. There are goods in life which any man may have, if he will pay the purchase. There are situations, to enjoy the advantage of which, you must submit to certain inconveniencies. There is a treatment and a cast of manners, which, if we will converse with the world, we cannot but now and then meet with. There is a conduct rationally dictated by our state and condition, to which our wisdom and our interest ought to lead us to attend. Study well, then, yourselves, and your abilities, and you will scarcely ever have to complain of disappointment, and want of success.

success. Reflect with an enlarged and candid mind upon the situations in which you are placed, and you will generally find you are uneasy at impossibilities. Gain a knowledge of the world, and you will consider what provoked and disgusted you, as only fit subjects for your meditation, or fit objects for your ridicule. Accurately survey your state and condition, and you will be quite different creatures from what, for want of this, too great a part of your species are. Your life will appear to you but a hand-breadth: it will be regulated, not by your senses, but by your belief. You will refuse pleasures, for fear of invisible punishment; and seek, or, at least, endure calamity, in hopes of rewards that shall be obtained in another state.

S E R M O N V.

The History of Eli.

I SAM. ch. iii. v. 13.

I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

I VERY much approve, says an ancient writer, of holding up to view infamous or honourable characters. This was a method, he informs us, his father made use of, to incline him to any particular virtue, or to give him an aversion to any particular vice. If, says he, my father advised me to live within bounds, and to be contented with the fortune he should leave me, do you not, saith he, see the miserable condition of Burrus and the son Albus? Let the misfortune of these two wretches teach you to avoid luxury and extravagance. If he would inspire me with an abhorrence to debauchery, do not, saith he, make yourself like Sæctanus, when you may be happy in the enjoyment of lawful pleasure. To illustrate the force of this method, our author adds, that as a headstrong patient, who will not at first follow his physician's prescription, grows orderly when he hears that his neighbours die all around him, so youth is often frightened from vice, by hearing the ill report it brings upon others.

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Under the impresson of the propriety of this writer's opinion, I have chosen the history of Eli and his two sons for our present meditation: which, if you will lend me your attention, I trust I shall be able to make somewhat edifying to such as class either with the one or the other. That a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, may be literally true; but it will not hold good when analogically applied to a man and his children. For it is too common a thing to see the best parents cursed with a most wretched offspring. Perhaps, we cannot conceive of a better man, in most respects, than the one mentioned in our text; but, as to his sons, a couple of worse reprobates, never brought grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. But where lies the fault? Sorry am I to remark, that from the history before us, and from the observations that I have had the opportunities of making in life, too often in the parents; "their sons make themselves vile, because they restrained them not." Is it not a shocking reflection? These two sons of Eli, who are called by the sacred historian, the sons of Belial, were actually priests, ministers in holy things, to the people of Israel. And what is somewhat singular, their evil conduct discovered itself, even in the line of their own profession. They had not a respect even to the outward and visible signs. For though it was a custom for the priest's servant to wait 'till the fat was burnt, before he took the part that was dedicated to the priest, these men disdained to stand at such a trifle; they ordered their man to take their share without stopping for any such form, and if it was refused, to bring it away by force. The consequence of which was, "the people abhorred the offering of the Lord." And, indeed, great would have been the wonder if they had not. It would be invidious, perhaps, to hint at any thing like a parallel in the present day, to what is here recorded. But I cannot however, help remarking, that a man given to satire would, I am afraid, find it no difficult matter to point out in the history of enforcing and demanding certain clerical rights, many instances bearing a striking resemblance to the case in question, both as to manner and effect.

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But to proceed, when men are gotten to such a pass as to despise religion, and all its modes and observances; in short, to consider it as a mere farce, or a craft by which they are to get their living, morality can never expect to meet with much quarter from them. We see this, at least, was plainly the case with these two sons of Eli. Their conduct was all of a piece: they are recorded to have been guilty of such acts of abandoned profligacy, as decency will not permit me to relate. Vice is detestable in all characters, but it is certainly doubly detestable in men wearing the habit of a religious order. If a saint in crape, be twice a saint in lawn, a sinner in the same predicament, will, I am sure, deserve to have the same conclusion formed respecting him.

Farther, if hypocrisy be ever allowable, 'tis when it pays a tribute to decency, and the opinion of our fellow-creatures. The last barrier that virtue maintains against the encroachments of vice is, I believe, shame. Our first parents, you may remember, scrupled not to disobey the command of God; but when they had done it, they hid themselves, because they were ashamed. With these sons of Eli, however, even this was broken down. They did not, as many of their profession do, sin under cover, but they did it openly; their wickedness was the subject of all men's conversation. In short, they were a pair of finished clerical debauchees. It is an observation, true to a considerable extent, that parents are the last who know the vices of their children. Enormities, however, of the flagrant nature of those which we have been mentioning, could not well be undiscerned even by the most unsuspecting father. Indeed, there seems to have been but little danger that Eli should remain ignorant in this respect, since, as he himself told his sons, "he heard of their evil doings by all the people."

But of what signification was it, that he was made thus acquainted with the vicious behaviour of his children? What part did he act, upon his being informed of the whole? He did not, indeed, as some parents in the world are known to do, when they hear of, or see their son's vices, address them by some ludicrous

crous appellation, admiring their spirit, and making a jest of their debaucheries. Nor, was his conduct like that of some others, who look upon it as a kind of necessity, or a thing of course, that youthful passions should be a little indulged, and that their sons should sow, what they consider as their oats. Nor farther, though he was judge of Israel, the very first man of the nation, did he seem to think, with many of the present day, that the sons of gentlemen, and men of rank, have a kind of right to be vicious, more especially in one of the articles in which Hophni and Phinehas were particularly notorious. Nothing of this absurd, indecent, and unjustifiable nature appeared in his conduct. Thoroughly virtuous and religious himself, he thus gravely rebukes them, and piously argues with them. "Why do ye such things? for I hear of your doings by all this people. Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If any man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if any man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" "Notwithstanding this," says the sacred historian, "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord *would* slay them." A much better reason than this, cries the sciolist in Scripture phrases, might surely have been assigned. "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord *would* slay them?" Where then was their fault? The unhappy young men could not help persevering in wickedness, the Lord willed them to do so, and who can resist the Almighty? When a man makes such observations as these, (and there is many a man who does) upon what he finds in the Bible, at the instant that he is flattering himself, that he is shewing his vast shrewdness and acuteness, he is giving the most flagrant proof of his ignorance, and want of critical skill. Every one, at all conversant with the language of holy writ, knows very well, that this phrase, "because the Lord *would* slay them," is of the same import with a thousand others that are to be met with in both the old and new Testament, none of which are ever allowed to imply any thing incongruous with

man's free agency. Thus, in the prophecy of Esaias it is said, "Go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." And in St. Mark, our Saviour says to his disciples, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they might see, and not perceive, and hearing they might hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." That is, unto you who have not yet shewn yourselves utterly incapable of being wrought upon by any motive whatever, God is graciously pleased to give still farther proofs of his loving kindness; but from those who have arrived to such a degree of depravity, that it is plain nothing can ever have an effect upon them, God is said, as it were, to withdraw himself, to give them up to a reprobate mind, and to harden their hearts. This was exactly the case with the sons of Eli; their habits of vice were become so rooted and fixed in them, that nothing could ever have brought them to reformation. They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord *would* slay them; not because the Lord wished or desired to slay them, for he never desireth the death of a sinner; but because he saw their case was become desperate: it was absolutely impossible to renew them again to repentance; they had made themselves "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction." But how came these unhappy young men into this deplorable state? The reason is upon record: they made themselves vile, "because their father restrained them not." Here is a cause fully adequate to the effect. Look into the world and you will find it operating, in exactly the same manner, in the present day. Take notice of the herd of simple ones, the counterparts of Eli's sons, that abound so much amongst us,

us. What makes one the vicious fool he is? What? His father was one of those whom the satyrists call a foolish fond old man, who could not bear to have his child contradicted, and so became the actual fosterer of all his sons bad passions and inclinations, by his weak indulgencies.

Take another promiscuously from the same group, who goes the way to the house of the harlot, and tarries long at the wine. His conduct is perfectly natural. What parent could hope to see his son virtuous, who, in the very age of boyish pleasures, supplied him with money to excess, and fostered him in the gratification of every corrupt wish as it arose.

Scrutinize the history of a third, who is by no means in one of the lowest forms in vice. How came he to such a pass? He was sent by his father to a seminary, where, as Mr. Locke says, it was impossible for him to learn, only a little Latin and Greek, at the immense hazard of his innocence and virtue; and, unfortunately, the cast, as it might be expected, turned up against him.

Attend to a fourth. What a coxcomb in manners; and what a libertine in morals? But who wonders? Before the age of puberty, in the very critical hour of danger, raw, undisciplined, unused to temptation, he was entered into a profession, the greater number of the members of which, even Charity itself, will not allow one to say, are very fit companions for youth. Indeed, nothing less than the miracle which saved Daniel from being devoured by lions, can possibly save a young man from being ruined, who pitches his tent within the lines of a camp. We might thus descant upon the vast crowd of young debauchees that infest, at the present time, both town and country, and scarcely one should we find, whose misconduct might not thus justly be traced up to the same origin.

I am well aware, that a system of parental restraint, would come in extremely well, just at this part of my history. But granting that there would be no presumption, in one who has had an opportunity of practising in his own person only the duties of a son, in giving specific rules for the regulation of the conduct of a
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parent; granting I say, this, I freely confess, that I feel myself unequal to the task. I must content myself, therefore, with making such observations as shall serve to enforce the necessity of the measure in general, leaving the particular mode to the good sense and affection of such as feel themselves interested in the matter.

It is plain from the history before us, that no man can have his sons virtuous, who acts towards them after the manner of Eli: but it may be, that the parents who thus shew themselves so flagrantly negligent of their children's morals, are not very much hurt at their deficiency in this respect, while no temporal inconvenience ensues. But there is scarcely an instance, in a thousand, in which this is not the case. Can ought, I would ask, be more common, than to see a young man from being the picture of health and beauty, reduced by his debaucheries to a loathsome, emaciated figure; a misery to himself, and a disgust to others? Is the history, I would ask, of the Prodigal, to whom his father divided his living, and who, having wasted his substance by riot and extravagance, was sent into the field to feed swine, a history at all exaggerated, or beyond what frequently happens? Who hath woe, I would ask; who hath sorrow; who hath contentions; who hath wounds without a cause? Who, but those that tarry long at the wine, those that are given to strong drink? In short, are not these, or similar consequences, the constant and almost unavoidable effects of indulged and unrestrained vice?

Hence then we see, that an attention to the morals of children, is enforced upon parents, not merely on account of the intrinsic excellence of virtue, but likewise, by its absolute necessity to their actual well-being in life. Every father, who really possesses a common affection for his sons, be he ever so lax with regard to his ideas of maintaining a virtuous conduct for its own sake, must, nay cannot but wish to instill it into his children, in order to prevent the direful effects arising from the neglect of it. Indeed, bitter is the portion that parent provides himself, who does not do this: his "children will certainly become his curse."

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But, if such be the unavoidable misery, to which even parents who have but little love of virtue on its own account are subjected, by the vices and imprudencies of their children, how much greater must that of those be, who, at the same time that they lament the bad effects of licentiousness in their sons, are tormented likewise with the thought, that they are disgracing their nature, becoming enemies to God and to goodness, and rendering themselves hopeless with respect to futurity? If, fellow Christians, we can form a just conception of this, we may have some idea of old Eli's state of mind. One of the first characteristics of this unhappy good man, seems to have been a resignation and complacency of temper; otherwise, no doubt, we should have had some passionate expressions of his recorded, on the sad subject of his children's misconduct. The sacred historian is, indeed, perfectly silent respecting any particular personal injuries that Eli had to mourn, which his sons had sustained by their vicious deportment, excepting "that they were despised and harshly spoken of by all who knew them." For, accident, or to speak more piously and philosophically, Providence, by one of those events which might have put an end to the most virtuous, as well as the most vicious, prevented these two wicked characters from giving to the world a specimen of the destructive nature of debauchery, in bringing on a rapid dissolution of the human frame. For, it came to pass, that in a battle with the Philistines, in which they were engaged in attending upon the ark of God, they were both of them slain. There is something dreadful in a person's going out of the world, like these young men, with all their vices blossoming around them. If there be any difference between virtue and vice; if there be a moral governor hereafter; if the whole story of a heaven and a hell be not a mere romance; my soul, I am sure, would die within me, at the thought of a vicious child's being thus taken off. This was actually the case with poor old Eli, whose "flawed heart" could not sustain the shock: for, as soon as the messenger arrived from the field of battle,

battle, and told him that the ark of God was taken, and that his two sons, Hophni and Phineas, were dead, "he fell from off his chair backward, and his neck brake, and he died."

If, my young friends, the picture which your imagination cannot but now present to your view, does not move you, vain will be the power of words. If the breathless corpse of a father, murdered by the vicious and untimely end of his children, as much as if a dagger had been thrust by them to his heart, can be contemplated by you without emotion; oh, how harsh would be the term that ought to be applied to you! If that venerable head laid low, low in the dust; that aged face, which, even in death wears its sorrow-struck aspect, does not touch your filial piety, may my heart never take any of you to its confidence! But I will not pay your feelings so ill a compliment as to suppose, any one of you capable of being unaffected by this sad catastrophe. I will not, to work upon your sensibility, ask of you the loan of your imagination, in order to make you fancy the sad picture before you to be that of your own indulgent father. Heaven forbid! that my own feelings of filial affection, should ever permit me even to attempt thus the affecting of others by an enlargement on the heart-rending idea. Nor, indeed, is it necessary. For there are none of you, I would hope, who will ever give cause for the question to be asked concerning any one of your parents, "what! have his children brought him to this pass?" There are none of you, I would hope, but who will endeavour, so to conduct yourselves, that if it should please the Deity to tear any one of you from your parent's bosom, they will, at least, have the consolation that the old Roman had, on a similar occasion, when he "thanked the gods that his boy had done his duty." There are none of you, I would hope, who will not strive by the most early acquirements of every thing amiable and virtuous, to enable your parents, if Providence thinks fit to make them mourn your loss, to comfort themselves with the heart-cheering prospect that animated that great orator of anti-

antiquity when he exclaimed, oh, glorious day! when I shall be transported from this habitation of dust and clay, to the mansion of the spirits of just men made perfect; when I shall see again not only those whom I esteemed and respected for their wisdom, but my son, than whom a better man, or a more affectionate child, never existed; whose corpse I attended to the grave, an office he should rather have done for me: but heaven's will be done; this is my consolation, there is but a step between me and happiness with him again.

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S E R M O N VI.

On the Duty of Children to their Parents.

EXODUS ch. XX. v. 12.

Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee

SOME of the most ingenious, and most liberal commentators upon the old Testament, who have been the farthest possible from shewing any the least degree of superstitious veneration for this part of the Bible; who have not scrupled to regard Moses as writing and acting from himself in many cases, where numberless other persons have considered him as under the immediate influence of God, have yet been ready, at all times, to acknowledge the decalogue, or ten commandments, as the production of divinity. Indeed, it would be a very high degree of hardness for any man, not an absolute infidel, not to allow this honourable descent to, at least, this portion of the Jewish Scriptures, as our blessed Lord himself has dignified them, more than once, with the title of the commandments of God.

But let the origin of them be what it may, the reasonableness, equity; in short, the general excellency, of every one of them, has for ages been the object of universal admiration. The one I have chosen for our present meditation, is not the least admirable amongst them: I hope to render the consideration of it useful;
First,

First, By making some remarks upon the commandment itself.

Secondly, By explaining its extent.

Thirdly, By illustrating the promise annexed to it.

First, then, I shall make some remarks upon the commandment itself.

And first of all, There is a singularity in the mode in which this commandment is said to have been first handed down, not unworthy of notice. On the first publishing of the decalogue to the Jewish people, Moses is said to have taken two stones, on which he engraved it. One of which, he made to contain such commandments as referred principally to the duty due to God, and the other such as had respect to what is due to man.

In regard to the one which we are now considering, it is observable, that it was engraved partly upon the one, and partly upon the other. Hence then, with no small degree of propriety, it has been inferred, that Moses meant to consider the duty owing to parents, as something of a mixt nature; as partaking, in some measure, of that venerableness with which the Deity himself ought to be regarded, as well as of that justice, equity, and humanity, with which every fellow creature ought to be treated. Nor is this idea of Moses at all romantic, or even singular; for it is very well known, that the Romans entertained these very sentiments upon the subject. Nay, they have even made use of the very same term, viz. piety, to express an obedient regard to parents as well as to the gods. But what say our own feelings and suggestions upon this occasion? What is the kind and degree of reverence which every ingenuous heart is conscious of experiencing towards the fosterers of its existence? Is there a son amongst us who is not ready to acknowledge, that he looks not upon his parents as upon common persons? Is there a son amongst us, who does not, to use the language of Dr. Jortin, consider them as a kind of terrestrial gods, appointed by Providence to bring us into the world, and to preside over us for our good?

Secondly, Another thing worthy of notice in the commandment we are considering is, that it enjoins

the offering of equal honour to the mother as to the father. This is a matter in which the laws and institutions of many other people have been sadly deficient. Amongst the Greeks and Romans, with whom parental authority was carried to a very exceptionable height, the mother was generally entirely out of the question. It was the father only, who had the power of life and death over his son, and to whom the honour and respect of his children were chiefly addressed.

Nay, in countries where the ten commandments of Moses are adopted, and made the general ground-work of their civil laws, the mother has had much too little of filial honour allowed her. But, in the name of equity, what reason can be assigned for this partiality? If tenderness, and the expressions of kindness and attention be any foundation for the reverence due from a child to his parent; who can read over the catalogue of his mother's favours to him, and withhold from her, her share of honour. If superior sense and understanding be the ground-work of filial veneration, take a view of the world at large, and no one that thoroughly knows mankind will be at a loss, on which side the scale, on this account, ought to preponderate.

Thirdly, It is worthy of notice respecting this commandment, that it is not accompanied with a counter one, respecting the behaviour of parents to their children. It is well known that affection descends in a much stronger degree than it ascends: that is, that parents in general, love their offspring much more powerfully than their offspring love them. Hence, there can be but little danger that a father or mother should be deficient in the duties they owe to their children. It would, therefore, have been unnecessary and superfluous in any law-giver, to have endeavoured to have secured these duties by any positive injunction. But, as the reverse, namely, a deficiency in the duties due from children to parents may, and often does happen, it was wise in Moses not to leave them to an ascending affection, but to enjoin them by a strong and express command.

What has been said leads me to the second thing proposed, viz, to consider the extent of this commandment;

ment; or what the conduct of children should be, in order to comply with its nature, spirit, and end.

Now in the first place, this commandment certainly requires that we should not only feel, but on all occasions, express in our deportment, a reverence for our parents. There are few, very few young persons indeed, really deficient in filial regard, compared with the too great number of those who are dreadfully negligent in the manner of their testifying it. If we do not allow this, what an opinion must we form of the state of this duty, from what we cannot but perceive almost daily taking place. Who does not mark a thousand harshnesses, and observe a thousand inattentions in the conduct of numberless young persons towards their parents? But God forbid, that in all, or any of these cases, all true filial piety should be wanting. God forbid, that there should be one amongst the number whom I am now addressing, who, if he were in the least degree suspected of such deficiency, would not indignantly ask with Hazael, what, is thy servant a dog? Need I fear then, the giving of offence by exclaiming, what a pity is it, that any one who has the true yearnings of affection, should ever with his parents "bandy hasty words; should ever look blank " upon a father, or with his tongue, most serpent-like, " strike upon his mother's heart." Surely, surely, where the inward and amiable spirit of filial piety is really existing, it is a sad subject of regret, that there the outward signs of it should be wanting.

Secondly, The complying with the commandment in question, certainly requires in children implicit obedience. There have been some persons, who have chosen to found the right of parents to the obedience of a child, wholly, or chiefly, on their having been the instruments of bringing them into existence; and who have inferred, from hence, a sovereign right in the parents to dispose of the life, liberty, and fortune of their child. Hence, one of our first writers makes one of his characters thus address a young person, who shewed some reluctance in obeying a parent's command. "Be advised: to you, your father " should be as a God. One that composed your beauties; yea, and one to whom you are but as a form in " wax

“ wax, by him imprinted, and within his power to leave “ the figure, or disfigure it.” But this is undoubtedly an absurd foundation, and an extravagant stretch of the duty in question. And it is extremely easy to fix parental authority within due and moderate bounds, on a basis much less liable to objection. For, as young people need some guidance and government in their minority, and as there is some peculiar reason to trust the prudence, care and affection of a parent, preferably to that of any other person, it is reasonable that children, especially while in their minority, should yield obedience to their parents; without which, neither the order of families, nor the happiness of the rising generation could be secured. But to what extent ought we to yield obedience? This, no doubt, must be limited by circumstances. Much must depend upon the age and ability of the child, compared with the capacity and character of the parent. There may be cases, where, on account of these, all duty from the former to the latter, as far as respects obedience, is entirely cancelled. But supposing nothing exceptionable or extraordinary in either party, but that the relationship subsisting is upon the general terms, which we see commonly prevailing in the world. How stands the matter in instances of this nature? By some very eminent moralists it has been asserted, that parents have a right to expect obedience in every thing, however rigorous or hard, that is not absolutely contrary to the dictates of conscience, or the laws of civil society. But granting that this idea of the case is a little too extravagant, certain it is, that it ought not to be considered as very much beyond what is right and fitting. For, if once children are allowed to combat with parental authority; if once they are permitted to judge for, and act for themselves, the whole œconomy of parental jurisdiction is shaken to the foundation; at least, all its beneficial effects are exposed to the utmost degree of danger.

Thirdly, This commandment of honouring our parents, certainly requires of us, the asking of their advice, and consulting their wishes in whatever we undertake of consequence. It is astonishing what an interest parents, through the whole of life, continue to have in the welfare and happiness of their offspring. Nothing that happens

to a child is unimportant to a father, or a mother. A parent, therefore, never has more pain than when by a child he is considered and treated as an alien or a stranger; when he sees his son or his daughter taking the most important steps in life without ever once deigning to ask his advice, or to solicit the assistance of his years and experience. The command then of the text, in the view of it, in which we are now considering it, calls for attention from us, from the most affecting of motives. None, I am sure, but such as are totally devoid of every ingenuous principle, can fail of feeling its force, or being actuated by its influence.

Fourthly, The command of honouring our father and our mother, most undoubtedly requires, that we should aid and assist them, and contribute every thing in our power to render them happy.

There is not a character more despicable in society, than the man who is inattentive to the happiness of his parents. Can any thing be conceived more shocking, more abhorrent to every ingenuous and good feeling, than for a son to be enjoying all the luxuries of life, while his father, or his mother, is a dependent upon charity, or earning a scanty subsistence by the hardest and most laborious of employments?

Oh! What owe we not to the dear authors and fosterers of our being! Have not they oftentimes for us risen early, and taken late rest, and eaten the bread of carefulness? And what shall we not return for their tenderness and care? Oh surely, surely there are none of us, but "who better know the offices of nature, the bond of " childhood, the effects of courtesy, and the dues of gratitude." Indeed, if this were not the case, the very brutes beneath us would be shame and confusion to our species. In proof of this, I appeal to the History of the Stork, whose young nourish and feed their aged parents, covering them with feathers, when the shedding of their own exposes them to the injury of the weather; and flying in couples, by joining their wings, bear them on their backs when fatigued by the length of flight. This example is so lively and so affecting, that the duty of children to their parents has been expressed by some Greek writers,
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by a compound word, signifying, "acting the part of a Stork."

Lastly, This commandment of honouring our father and our mother, certainly requires our submitting to their humours and their passions, their severity and hard usage; and bearing all their most unreasonable peevishness and angry rebukes, with patience and temper.

This is a mode of honouring parents, which, as it is the most difficult to put in practice, is attended with the greatest degree of merit. You, who have the misfortune to have hard and rigorous parents, who treat you more like slaves, than the objects of their affection, have, indeed, a hard and delicate part to act. Nothing, however, can become you so well, as patience and silent compliance. Whoever sees you thus acting, will regard you with affectionate sympathy. Like Shem and Japhet, who covered the nakedness of their father, which Ham had disclosed, and for which he was cursed, you will become the objects of praise and admiration. There is a noble example in the Roman history, of a young man, named Manlius Pomponius, which, for it's spirit, at least, is worthy of being recorded, as not undeserving of your imitation. "A
" certain tribune accused the father of this Manlius to
" the people, of several grievous crimes; among the rest
" of cruel usage and barbarity to his son. The young
" man, upon hearing what was going forwards, went
" one morning to the tribune's house, whom he found
" in bed, and instantly putting a knife to his throat, made
" him swear that he would withdraw the indictment, and
" prosecute his father no farther, declaring that he
" would rather submit to the most slavish drudgery his
" father could impose upon him, and toil at it all the days
" of his life, than see him prosecuted and exposed for any
" rigorous carriage to him."

Thus, I have endeavoured to illustrate the nature, spirit, and end of the commandment in the text. Perhaps I may appear, at first sight, to some, to have been rather too rigid in my interpretation. Let such, however, who may have adopted this idea, seriously consider for a moment, how much they actually owe their parents; what pain and anxiety, what tender care and concern, what trouble

trouble and expence, and what a world of affection went to the bringing of them up. But this, in truth, is a computation which no man is capable of making, justly, till he shall come to have children of his own; then matters will appear to him quite otherwise than they did before. And, therefore, as the philosopher, who was found riding on a hobby horse with his little boy, desired that his friend would forbear to expose that levity of his till he was a father himself; so in the case before us, whoever shall imagine, that the duty to parents has been carried beyond equity and reason, or their merits to their children over-rated; we must beg that he will be content to suspend his final determination on this matter, till that time come, which alone can make him a competent judge in the business.

But I hasten to the last thing proposed, namely, to illustrate the promise annexed to the observance of this commandment; "that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

And I observe in the first place, that it was a prevailing idea of the Jews, that peculiar temporal blessings were annexed by God, to certain virtues. It may be, therefore, that the promise we are about to illustrate, was affixed to the commandment we have been considering, merely in compliance with this prejudice. It is impossible for us to ascertain precisely the motives and grounds upon which each particular law or appointment of deity is founded or established. It is recorded, we know, in the history of the Jews, that he actually gave them some laws that "were not good," that is, he consulted their prejudices and peculiar circumstances, in the forming of some of the statutes by which he wished them to be regulated; and, of consequence, ordained certain laws, which, though not good in themselves, were good, as they respected the situation and condition of the people with whom he had to do. It may be then, that the promise in the text, had for its origin some such cause as this. It may be, that God thought it proper to sanctify the commandment in question, by the application of a motive, to the influence of which he well knew the Jews, from long preconceived notions, were peculiarly disposed.

Secondly, There is no occasion, perhaps, for the sup-
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position we have here made, in order to account for the promise annexed to the commandment in the text ; since no one can pretend to say, that the blessing of God, expressed by the giving of long life, may not be made, especially to follow the honouring of parents. That the deity is not an indifferent spectator of the conduct of his moral creatures, we have every reason to conclude from every idea we can possibly form of his nature and character : and that he has the power to dispense his blessings, when, how, and to whom, he, in his wisdom and goodness shall think fit, is a matter of which no one can entertain a doubt. That the practicer, then, of the amiable and exalted duty of honouring parents, should be favoured by God, even in this world by his extending to him one of the most distinguished blessings of mortality, is a matter, which, though impossible to be actually demonstrated, is at least, very rationally to be concluded, from our ideas of the deity. It may be then, that the promissory clause in the commandment before us, is a direct and absolute stipulation, on the part of God, to accompany, with a special mark of his favour, the exact compliance with the duty he here enjoins.

Thirdly. Supposing that neither of the illustrations we have hitherto given of the clause, "that thy days, &c." be satisfactory, what objection can there possibly be, in considering it as consequential, rather than promissory. If we look into the Scriptures we shall find, that this is not the only place where a similar blessing is, in the same manner, promised or annexed to the practice of virtue in particular. Thus in Proverbs, "Happy is the man," saith Solomon, "that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding : length of days is in her right hand." And our Saviour in his Sermon upon the Mount says, "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Now the evident meaning of what is here quoted certainly is, that the practice of virtue being the best preservative of health ; the maintaining a peaceable and quiet demeanor, the best security against the accidental hurts occasioned by broils and contentions ; the sober, discreet, and good-natured man, is of all other characters in society, the most likely to live the longest and happiest in the world. As then this is the true
gloss

gloss which ought to be put upon these, and such like passages of Scripture, there is little doubt, but that a similar sense, attributed to the clause in the text, is equally justifiable. For what better rule could be given to a young man, in order to insure to him long life, than "honour thy father and thy mother." Who are those who shorten their days so much as the froward and disobedient, the prodigal that leaves his parent's home, the debauchee over whom no one can have controul? On the other hand, who are those whom we see blooming in health, prospering in life, with every thing flattering in their prospects, and comfortable in their hopes? Who, but such, as have submitted to the restraints of parental authority; who have suffered themselves to be guided and directed by age and experience; and who have acquired the truly honourable characters of dutiful and affectionate children.

Take then, my young friends, any view of yourselves you please; consider yourselves as creatures of affection; as susceptible of the feelings of gratitude; as moral agents endued with a power of discerning the beauty or deformity of actions: or even only as beings capable of distinguishing what will most contribute to your temporal happiness; the propriety of observing the command in the text must forcibly strike you.

In the words of St. Paul, then, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth."

S E R M O N VII.

On Prayer to God through Christ.

ROM. ch. xvi. v. 27.

To God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ.

THE opinion of Jesus Christ's being the mediator of our addresses to God, has been an opinion universally prevalent through all ages of the church.

Every time we assemble together in public worship, we profess and maintain it; and by our doxologies, or conclusions of our prayers, unreservedly yield our assent to it.

It must, therefore, be a matter rather acceptable to you, to have the grounds on which this opinion is founded, explained and illustrated; the objections to it removed and confuted; and the good effects resulting from it commented on and enumerated.

To begin then with the 1st, viz. to explain and illustrate the grounds on which the worshipping of God through Christ is founded.

In the First place, it seems fitting such lowly creatures as mortals. Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the most high God? In his sight not even the angels are clean. How then shall mortal man appear in his presence? Shall we, dust and ashes, presume to arrest the regard of the Majesty of the Universe?
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Shall we, who are nought but vanity and a lie, dare to make our addresses to Infinite Holiness? Shall we, who are known to tremble even before an earthly superior, feel no degree of awe when we stand before the Lord of heaven and earth? Shall we, who falter in our praises of a fellow mortal, and dread to implore a favour from a creature formed like ourselves, have no kind of hesitation in our adoration of the High and Mighty One who inhabiteth eternity; nor any share of apprehension in supplicating the mercy of him who made us and all mankind, by the word of his power? Great God! who amongst us, at the thought of thee, does not sink into nothing? Who, at the contemplation of thy perfections, is not obliged to bow down his head and shut his lips in silent veneration? Like the priests of Israel, we cannot stand to minister unto thee, because of the cloud of thy glory. We are in thy presence, like the cherubims in Isaiah's vision, who covered their faces with their wings. Through Christ then be our praises ascribed unto thee; in his name be our prayers for thy blessing; and by him be our access with confidence unto the throne of thy grace.

Secondly, The character that Christ maintained in the world, and his exaltation in consequence thereof, seem to offer us another ground or reason for our worshipping God through him. Never was there a more endearing union than that between Christ and mankind. He came into the world, specially commissioned from heaven for their good. He came to be their Prince and their Saviour. He did every thing that their unhappy state required, and obtained for them from heaven every blessing they could wish. In short, he died for their sins, and rose again for their justification. And, as a reward for this his accomplishment of the will of his father, God highly exalted him; raised him to a state of the utmost dignity and glory; made him the first fruits of immortality; and placed him in a most distinguished manner at his own right hand. This then being a just representation of Christ, is it reasonable to suppose, that in his present state of exaltation, mankind are become the subjects of his indifference? Or can it be imagined, that he is now no ways concerned for those creatures for whose ransom he
gave

gave his life? Can it be thought that he, who emptied himself of his glory for our sakes, no more interests himself with the deity on our behalf? Or can it be believed that he, who in his state of humiliation could say, "I know, father, that thou hearest me always," cannot now in his state of glory and honour equally lay claim to a similar influence? It is certainly a fair way of arguing, to conclude from what Christ was, what he is. We know that he was our friend in the flesh: he no doubt is so in the spirit. He was the occasion of our greatest happiness when clothed as a man: he will not desert us now he is raised above angels. Through him then, it becomes us to apply unto God. In his name it becomes us to seek the father of mercies. Our penitential vows he will lay before the deity, in the most favourable light. Our expressions of sorrow for our sins, he will record with a peculiar pathos. Our petitions for favour and blessing he will graciously second; and our deprecations of the Almighty's wrath and displeasure he will accompany with his intercessions.

Thirdly, Another ground or reason for our worshipping God through Christ is this, that it must be a source of pleasure to him to be the medium of the happiness of his followers.

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It may, perhaps, be said, that God might immediately ~~disburse~~ ^{dispense} his favour and his blessings to the world of mankind; and that without the intervention of Christ, he might shew his regard for the inhabitants of this globe. But it is well observed, to be the general œconomy of his providence, to make one being happy, by appointing it to be the instrument of happiness to another. Thus, therefore, the idea of Christ's being the mediator of the deity's favours to mortals, is an idea, perfectly consistent with what in other cases is seen to prevail. When we consider then, that God is said "*to have rewarded the obedience of his son,*" we cannot well imagine that he would omit, in the various blessings heaped upon him, that which of all others, is the greatest that either a mortal or immortal spirit can possibly know. It is universally acknowledged by every being possessed of a rational soul, that there is no pleasure equal to the pleasure of doing good; no satisfaction comparable to that which

which arises from the dispensing of benefits. States of being are enviable or not, only as they in a smaller or greater degree enable us to attain this end. Nay, the chief happiness of deity himself, may, without irreverence, be supposed to arise from the communication of happiness. What then could the eternal father do more for his son, than raise him to be the mediator of his grace? What recompence of his obedience could Christ more earnestly wish for, than that of being the advocate of the children of men? And supposing this to be the case, not only is the world made happy by the blessings of God, but in perfect conformity with the usual administration of the deity, Christ is rendered inconceivably so, by being the instrument of their conveyance. And, therefore, as thus the greatest sum of happiness is produced in the universe, we may with no little propriety conclude, that it is actually the case; and that it becomes us to worship God, through Christ, not only for our own sakes, but for his.

Fourthly, Another ground or reason for our worshipping God, through Christ, seems to arise from his having experienced in his own person our weaknesses and infirmities.

The all gracious God seems, in every dispensation of his providence, to have had a most benevolent and kind regard to our comfort and ease. In nothing, however, does this more conspicuously appear, than in the appointment of Christ as our advocate and mediator. In the language of the epistle to the Hebrews, he has not given us an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points, tempted like ourselves. Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abram. He was in all things made like unto man, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he will be ready to succour, or to deprecate judgment, for those who are tempted. And surely Christians, this is matter of the greatest comfort to us. We pray unto God, through a Being who knoweth, from his own experience, what we are.

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He is acquainted with the power of temptation: he himself has been assayed by the devil. He knows how powerful to draw us from duty is the glory of the world and the pomp of riches. All these things were offered unto him. He knows what danger integrity is put to by want and necessity. Satan tried these effects upon him, when nature might be supposed most liable to yield. He knows what evils labour and poverty are: for though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, he had no where to lay his head. He knows what are the agonizing throes of an affected heart: for his sweat was once like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. He knows what it is to die in the extremities of torture: for when in that situation, he exclaimed, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And this is the Being through whom we are to address the father Almighty. This is the Being who will lay our complaints before God. Who can sufficiently admire this kind, this benevolent, this gracious appointment of the Deity? Is it possible to conceive of any thing apparently more fitting such creatures as we; or any thing exhibiting the kindness of heaven in a stronger light? Who so proper to be the advocate of mortality, as one who has experienced what it is? Whose name so proper to pray in, as his who knoweth each of our hearts: as his, who will make all allowances for weaknesses that he himself hath in some instances experienced: as his, who knoweth our frame, who remembereth from his own feelings that we are but dust?

Lastly, Another ground or reason for our worshipping God through Christ we deduce from the language of Scripture, and the practice of the Apostles.

Seeing then, says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, that we have a great high priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the son of God, let us hold fast our profession; let us draw nigh with a true heart and a full assurance of faith. For, Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which is but a figure of that to come, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.
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Who is he, says St. Paul, that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. If any man sin, says St. John, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, says our Saviour himself, that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you. I thank my God, says the apostle of the Jews, through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your guilt is spoken throughout all the world. I thank my God always in your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ. Now unto him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen. Now unto him who is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, to God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ. These are all the passages in the sacred volume, at least all that my remembrance and honest enquiries into the Scriptures, at present furnish me with, which have a reference to the subject of mediation. Few as they may seem, they are so direct and express, that he must be a very able critic indeed, if not an artful casuist, who will pretend, in opposition to them, to prove, that the doctrine of a mediator is not the doctrine of the New Testament. St. Paul certainly appears in his devotional practice, to authorise and countenance it. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, whoever he was, takes it for granted in the fullest manner. St. John expressly asserts it; and our blessed Lord himself recommends and encourages it.

And now, having gone through the several grounds

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or reasons for our worshipping God through Christ; having shewn that it is fitting such lowly creatures as mortals; that it appears to be authorized by the character Christ maintained in the world, and his exaltation in consequence thereof; that it is reasonable to be concluded, because it must be a source of pleasure to Christ, and one of the highest rewards God could bestow upon him, to be the medium of happiness to the world; that there seems to be a degree of propriety in making our addresses through a being who was himself, before his exaltation, like unto ourselves; and that the language of the Scriptures, and the practice of the Apostles was greatly in favour of it: having, I say, shewn these things, I proceed to consider and confute some of the principal of those objections which may be supposed to be brought against what we have been delivering.

In the first place, it may be said, that it is giving too high an idea of our Saviour.

What the precise degree of dignity is which our Saviour enjoys, is not possible to determine. What his exact rank in the scale of being is, we are utterly at a loss to fix. But, however, it would seem, that with respect to this world, he is next in glory and pre-eminence to the all-wise and Almighty God himself.

To stretch then our ideas of him to the highest pitch short of the infinite Being, is not too much. Provided we do not make him co-equal and co-eternal with the father, we are justified by Scripture (the only source of our information concerning him) to think of him in the most exalted light. He is said to have lived with the father before all worlds; to have been raised, after his descent upon earth, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; to have had all things put under his feet; that at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. Of this, says he himself, (thereby specifying in a manner his own dignity) knoweth no *man*, no not the angels, nor the son, but the father only. Thus he has placed himself higher than the
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angelic order, and inferior only to God himself. For it is justly to be inferred, that as he has mentioned no existing being between the son and the father, he meant it to be understood that the father alone was above him. Thus then, the objection against the doctrine of Christ as a mediator, from its giving too high an idea of him, is rather reversed: and the danger is, that persons judging of the dignity of characters more from their splendor than their real nature and excellence, will be apt to think, that the Saviour of the world, instead of being exalted, is in fact degraded, by his being made the furtherer of petitions, and the disposer of blessings.

Secondly, It is objected that the worshipping of God through Christ, is ascribing an attribute to the latter, which can only belong to the former; viz. Omnipresence.

It is certain, that omnipresence can be connected only with infinity. Whatever being is limited in its nature, cannot, most assuredly, fill unlimited space. But, surely, it is not irrational to suppose, that the influence of some beings may be greatly extended beyond that of others. Nay, we may reason upon this head from analogy, till we are quite lost in the depth of immensity. The worm we tread upon, cannot turn to wound us, but in the actual contact. The lion cannot rend you, except you come within the reach of his claw. But man, possessed of the faculty of reason, has learned to affect at the distance of miles; and is, as it were present in every part of a very considerable sphere. Go up higher then in the scale of being, and why not suppose that the angels by their natures, are enabled to accomplish more than man? Why not suppose their influence, some how or other, to be still more wide and diffused? Proceed on through we know not what states of excellence and perfection, to Christ the son of the Almighty; and who will pretend to fix his sphere of action? Who will pretend to say, hitherto he comes, but no farther? He may not, perhaps, soar with the eternity of days through worlds more numerous than the twinkling stars; but who can shew that he does not fill each part of this our

atom of the universe? Who can prove that the Son of God is not present with his influence in every corner of the planetary system? Who can declare this to be inconsistent with his nature, or impossible to his being. He that does, declares a most absolute and palpable absurdity, viz. that it impossible for any being, less than infinite, to have an influence throughout a finite system. Thus then, if it be not absurd to suppose (which it manifestly is not) Christ to be present in an inconceivable degree of space, provided only it be limited, it surely cannot be so to imagine him present only in the Christian world. And this is enough for us; this is all the omnipresence that we want Christ to be possessed of; this is quite sufficient to make clear our scheme of mediation; and this it is impossible to shew to be inconsistent with his acknowledged excellence, or any ways incongruous with the nature of things. And what reason thus finds little difficulty in proving, may be, the Scriptures expressly inform us actually is the case. Go, says our Saviour to his disciples, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto my father. Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Thus then we add, that this objection is founded upon a false principle, on the supposition of a consequence that by no means fairly follows. For though it is necessary that Christ should be so present to the creatures who address the Deity through him, as to be able to hear and distinguish their petitions, yet it is not necessary for this end that he should be omnipresent.

nipresent. It is sufficient if he is present where the Scriptures represent him to have peculiar concern; and which, granting him to be a meer finite being, it is possible, nay highly agreeable to reason, to suppose he may be.

Thirdly, Another objection to the worshipping of God through Christ is, that it encourages a superstition very prevalent, that of praying to angels and saints.

It might be sufficient to answer to this objection, that a thing's being abused is no argument against the use of it. It is, however, a matter of wonder, how so rational a practice should give rise to one so absurd and irrational. The character of our Saviour is confessedly of the highest and most exalted nature; and the Scriptures, as we have shewn, hold him out to us in a most distinguished light. Nay, what is more to the purpose, they represent him under the idea of a mediator; and expressly and literally stile him an advocate, and intercessor. That men then should consider him in this view, is not at all surprizing: and that they should maintain a conduct agreeable to this, is perfectly to be accounted for. But how different is it with respect either to angels or saints? The former are but very rarely mentioned in Scripture; and their nature and office scarcely ever touched upon. And as to the latter, there is not a single syllable respecting their influence in this world, after they have left it; not a **T**ittle to encourage any petitions to be addressed unto God by them. If men then, will suffer themselves to be led away by their own fancies; if they will suppose that the mediation of a Saint Chrysostom, and the intercessions of the angel Gabriel, are as likely to gain them the blessing of heaven, as those of the only mediator between God and man, we must pity their absurdity, but at the same time vindicate the Christian scheme from affording any real ground for so ridiculous a superstition. It is an absolute affront to common sense for any man to say, that the worshipping of God, through such a being as Christ, can give any just cause for the idolatrous practices of popery. The former we have proved not to be irrational in itself, and asserted in Scripture; the latter

latter may be proved to be absurd in their natures, and absolutely discountenanced in Scripture.

Fourthly, It is objected against the worshipping of God through Christ, that it is unnecessary, because God is of himself disposed to hear our petitions, and to grant our requests.

If a son shall ask bread of any of you who is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father, give the holy spirit to them that ask him? Now taking these expressions of Scripture in the most enlarged sense, that it is possible; supposing, that they do infer a disposition in the Deity to hear and attend to the addresses of his creatures, taking it for granted (without raising any of those difficulties upon the matter that might be started) that God could bless us without the intervention of a mediator; yet still, the objection is by no means valid, but must fall to the ground upon due consideration. It is certain that God, in the œconomy of his providence, seems, in some cases, not only to have created causes for the production of effects, but to have ordained effects for the happiness of certain causes. Thus, to illustrate the matter, it may be, perhaps, that the Deity could cause men to spring out of the earth, totally independently of each other, like the trees of the forest; and it would seem that this would be the simplest manner of bringing them into existence. Why then, it might be asked, has not God established this mode of production? Why? For the best and most obvious of reasons. If this were the case, all that abundance of felicity, that is the consequence of one man's being the medium of another's existence, would be entirely lost. Where would be all the endearments of conjugal affection? Where the delights of parental fondness? Where the exquisite feelings of filial piety? So that here the Deity manifestly appears to have respect, not so much to the end, as to the means; and he seems to have established such a mode or progress for man's existence, not because such a mode was absolutely necessary in order to cause him to exist,

exist, but because it was necessary to produce the happiness of a husband, parent, and son. To apply this to the removal of our objection. We have shewn in a former part of our discourse, that the office of a mediator is one of the highest and most exalted that can possibly be conceived, and replete with the greatest sum of happiness that can well be imagined. Now, therefore, though it may not be necessary that there should be a mediator between God and man, as it respects either the former or latter; yet, it certainly is necessary that there should be one, in order that the happiness of such a character should be enjoined. God, therefore, may not have appointed Christ to be the mediator of his blessings, because, otherwise, they could not have been dispensed to mortals; but, because, that in no other way, perhaps, could he have equally blest and rewarded him. And thus, even allowing to the objection all it's force; not even noticing that it perfectly proceeds upon an entire begging of the question, we have shewn, notwithstanding, that the doctrine of a mediator is founded on a necessity; though a necessity, indeed, somewhat different from what the objection is founded on. And the answer is full as satisfactory to every candid and fair reasoner, as if we had directly combated and confuted the real principle of the objection. For a thing's being proved upon one uncontrovertible datum to be *necessary*, renders it impossible for us to prove, upon another ground, that it is unnecessary.

Lastly, It is objected against the whole of what we have been delivering, that this phrase in Scripture through Christ, with those of *by him*, and *in his name*, imply no more than that we should worship God as Christ's disciples.

This is an objection that has been strongly urged; and many persons have sat down with this false idea of the matter perfectly easy and contented. But without entering into the various criticisms upon this head; without mentioning the forced interpretations which the adopting of this opinion has obliged persons to have recourse to, without spending our time in arguments of this nature; we will content ourselves with shewing, from the Scripture itself, that this gloss is
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utterly inadmissible. Ye now, says our Saviour in St. John, just before he was going to his father, have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh away. And in that day shall ye ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. Now if we suppose that the phrase *asking in the name of Christ*, means only praying to God as the disciples of Christ, it actually follows from Christ's declaration, "that his disciples had hitherto asked nothing in his name;" that during the whole time he was with them upon earth, they never once prayed at all; for if they had prayed at all, they must have prayed as his disciples, for such they were, and as nothing else, therefore, could they have prayed. Thus then, we in a very few words, upon the fairest ground, reduce the supporters of this objection to the most flagrant absurdity. For it cannot by any rational man be supposed, that the disciples of Christ never were engaged during the whole of their attendance upon our Saviour, in any acts of religious worship; Nay, we have evidence to the direct contrary upon record. But if this be not enough upon this point, it is to be observed further, that Christ no where recommends to his disciples to *ask any thing in his name till he was taken from them*. Now, it is rather extraordinary, that he should at this time, more particularly exhort them to pray unto God, as "*his disciples*," than at the time, when he was living and conversing them. To make our Saviour's conduct at all intelligible, we must take his expressions upon these occasions in their common acceptation. Hitherto, says he, ye have asked nothing in my name. I have hitherto been with you, upon earth, in a state of humiliation. But, lo! I go to the Father. I shall soon have accomplished the work that he has set me to do. I shall soon receive the reward of my obedience. I shall soon be appointed a Prince and a Saviour, and be able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by me. In that day, when I shall be placed at the right hand of your God and my God, whatsoever ye shall ask the father

father in my name, he will give it you. Thus understood, the language of our Saviour is perfectly clear. He asserts nothing but what is entirely consistent with the character of his disciples; and highly consonant with the gospel scheme. Whereas, understood in the sense which the objection would affix to it, it really makes our Saviour's account of the companions of his labours, strikingly absurd and improbable; and represents him as recommending a practice to be observed subsequent to his death, for which there does not appear more reason than before. And as thus we are enabled to shew that the phrase asking or praying *in the name of Christ*, cannot possibly mean praying merely as his disciples, there is little doubt but that the other phrases which we regard as synonymous therewith, are equally incapable of a similar construction.

And now, having answered with the greatest satisfaction to myself, with what degree to others I cannot possibly judge, the several objections to the doctrine or practice of worshipping God through Christ, I proceed, agreeable to what I proposed, in the Third place, to consider the good effects arising from such a practice.

First, The worshipping of God through Christ, or the concluding of our prayers or praises after this manner, has certainly a tendency to beget in us a spirit of humility.

It is greatly to be feared that the frequent repetition of these phrases, "and these things we ask in the name of Christ, hear and accept of these our praises and adorations through Jesus Christ," has caused many persons to make use of them without affixing any ideas at all to them. They end their prayers with them as a thing of course, and never think that they are one of the most important parts of their devotional exercises. For, what is the meaning of them? What sentiments ought they to cause to arise in our minds? What is the language which they most evidently speak? Is it not this? Hear us, Lord, "through Jesus Christ;" for in ourselves we are not worthy to approach thy presence. Hear us, Lord, "through Jesus Christ," for mere mortals as we are, we dare not plead with thee, the eternal Spirit.

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Hear us, Lord, "through Jesus Christ;" for we are mere nothing, nay, less than nothing and vanity; and how can we adore thine unspeakable Majesty! Hear us "through Jesus Christ," for as we are frail, imperfect, and erring creatures, we trust for thy favour in thine own well-beloved Son. If then these are or ought to be the sentiments that the use of such like phrases ought to inspire within us, what humility should we not express in the presence of Jehovah! If such be the condition of humanity, shall we ever suffer pride to attend us to the house of the Almighty? Shall we ever bring thither a lofty spirit, and a haughty look? Oh, no. Far, far be every thing from thence but the utmost lowliness of heart. Let nothing appear in our whole deportment there, but a broken and a contrite spirit; a spirit sensible of its own meaness, weakness, and littleness; a spirit perpetually reflecting, that all its hopes of acceptance with God, are through Jesus Christ.

Secondly, The worshipping of God, through Christ, has a tendency to increase our love and affection for him.

It certainly is a matter of the greatest moment, that we should maintain sentiments of regard for the great founder of our religion; for it is well known, that advice and commands are never so well received and obeyed, as when they proceed from those whom we value. The more therefore we are led to esteem Christ, the more shall we respect his precepts. In this light, therefore, the worshipping of God through him, is of essential service. For it is impossible to do this, as is our constant practice, without having our affection for him greatly increased. Can it be conceived that we can daily pray in his name, and not feel our hearts yearn towards him? Can it be imagined that we can continually make him the medium of our addresses to the father, and not feel our souls actuated with sentiments of love for him? Impossible! Christ as a Mediator is peculiarly endearing to us: as an advocate with the father, we cannot withhold from him our veneration. Every time that we make him *this* to us, our spirit must be actuated with a tenderness towards him. Every time we think of him in this affectionate
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light, he cannot be to us an object of indifference.

Thirdly, and lastly, the worshipping of God through Christ, has a tendency to make us continually mindful of the great blessings we have received by him.

The use from this practice, with every other that has or can be mentioned, can only accrue to persons who will duly reflect. To the inattentive mind, no good can possibly accrue therefrom, but to the thinking one very great good. Does the latter pray unto God through Christ. He is immediately led to recollect what is the ground of this appointment. He searcheth the Scriptures; he findeth that it was the consequence of Christ's obedience. His obedience to *what*, next moves his enquiry; to poverty, wretchedness, and death. For what end, he still further seeketh? He is told, by the sacred volume, for the salvation of man. And thus, by worshipping God, through Christ, the whole Christian scheme rises up in ardor to his view; the blessings he has received by the coming of Christ arrest his recollection; and gratitude for the gift of redemption warms and animates his heart. What then remains, but that I now exhort you reverently to maintain the continuance of a practice, founded upon so many rational grounds, so easy to be vindicated against all objections, and productive of such happy effects. Through Christ be glory ascribed unto God. By Christ be our praises laid before the Majesty of heaven. And in the name of Christ let our prayers be addressed to the throne of grace. Amen.

P R A Y E R I.

OH, thou, whose throne is established in the heavens; who existest before all worlds, and whose sovereignty will never know an end; who art God, the Father Almighty, supreme, and eternal!

What honor have we so great; what source of happiness have we so pregnant with bliss, as the permission thou hast given us of approaching thee as children to a father?

We can never sufficiently adore thee, under this endearing name. We can never sufficiently express that filial affection which it becomes us ever to feel.

To us, thou hast, indeed, been the best and kindest of parents.

To us, thou hast, indeed, known how to give good gifts.

In thee we have, indeed, found every thing that affection could dictate, or love communicate.

In the heavens above us; in the earth beneath us; in the air that surrounds us; in the light we behold; in the changes of the year; in the manifold productions of nature; and in the various uses to which all are subservient, thy mercy and loving kindness are abundantly conspicuous.

Thy universal family is full of happiness: Full be it also of gratitude.

Let the firmament echo with our songs of praise. Let the skies resound with our hymns of thanksgiving.

But with hearts thus expanding with gratitude, we would wish, likewise, to approach thee with all those sentiments of veneration, which are becoming children in the presence of a father, whom they feel themselves bound, by every possible motive of affection and duty, to worship and to honour.

We reverence thy great and adorable character.

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We pray, that thy name may ever be hallowed by all the inhabitants of the world.

We intreat thee, to possess our souls with such just and exalted apprehensions of thy nature and perfections, as that our minds may be ever awfully impressed, and our devout assertions ever warmly engaged.

May every appeal to thee, as the God of truth, be more sacred to us than life.

May we ever consider, that thou art a Being jealous of thine honour; and that thou will never hold him guiltless that taketh thy name in vain.

Who shall not fear thee, thou king of Saints? Who shall not glorify thee, thou source of all Being?

Thou art the sovereign Lord, and proprietor of every thing. The earth is thine, and the fullness thereof.

May thy dominion every where be understood, and every where acknowledged.

Oh, bring back again to their allegiance those who have rebelled against thee, and gone after strange gods; who bow down to sticks and stones; to beasts and reptiles; to the sun as it shines, and to the moon as she walketh in brightness.

Oh, rectify the errors of those whose minds superstition hath blinded; who have altars under every green tree; who ignorantly worship beings whom their own fears and apprehensions deify; who glorify the creature, but forget the Creator.

Extend and enlarge that knowledge of thy nature and character, which thou hast revealed unto us by thy Son.

Diffuse over the face of the globe, the glorious light of the gospel of truth; and give to all to feel its efficacious influence upon their hearts.

May thus thy kingdom come, in glory and perfection.

May that fullness of time be at hand, when one God, and one Lord Jesus Christ, shall be owned and obeyed by all nations and languages; when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; when peace and happiness shall cover the earth, as the water covers the sea; when nothing shall hurt or destroy in all thy holy mountain.

But while we thus pray unto thee, to extend by thine all-ruling influence the kingdom of truth and righteousness;

ness ; be it the ambition of our hearts to unite our feeble efforts, to the advancement and furtherance of the same glorious end.

May we, filled as we are with the knowledge of thy will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, walk worthy of the vocation by which we are called, unto all well pleasing, being fruitful in good works.

May our light so shine, that others seeing the happy effects of our Christian principles, may be induced to honour our profession, and bow the knee to the same Lord and Master.

May we, strengthened by thy might, who hast delivered us from the power of darkness, and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; henceforth, suffer no evil tempers, no sinful lusts, no unrighteous practices, to disgrace our characters, or put him who hath redeemed us to open shame.

May it be our pride and our glory, to be continually adding to our degrees of perfection ; to rival angels and archangels, in a regard to thy holy commandments, and in a conformity to thy most wise and righteous decrees ; so that, thus thy will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Oh, thou great arbiter of all events, we are duly sensible of our perfect and entire dependence upon thee. To thine inexhausted bounty we are indebted for all the comforts, conveniencies, and necessities of life.

To thee, it becomes us ever to be applying.

We are now in humble suit before thee, for the continuance of thy goodness.

Give us, we pray thee, this day, our daily bread.

Supply each returning want, which our unvitiated desires demand.

Give success to every lawful and honourable means, which our reason and our nature prompt us to make use of for the furtherance of our enjoyments.

Shouldest thou give us but food and raiment, therewith inspire us also with a spirit of contentment.

Shouldest thou see fit to cause our cup to run over, guard us against the ingratitude of forgetting the hand that alone worketh us rich.

Oh,

Oh thou kind and bountiful God, there is not one of us whom thou hast not favoured far beyond our deserts.

There is not one of us but who has actually shewn himself unworthy of the least of thy blessings.

Thou hast been the most indulgent and most beneficent of parents: we have been the most untoward and ungrateful of children.

We have acted contrary to the dictates of filial affection; we have broken through the restraints of filial duty.

We are conscious of our offences, and pray, that thou wouldest forgive us now, prostrate in thy presence, our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

We rejoice that we are emboldened thus to apply to thee for pardon. We feel in the consciousness of our own placability, a conviction that thou the father of our spirit art likewise placable.

Whence but from thee can proceed these feelings of perfect charity, with which we are now before thee.

It is thou, thou God of peace, who art thus inclined us to love them who hate us; to bless those who persecute us; and to pray for those who despitefully use us.

We hope, we trust that we are not deceiving ourselves in this respect. Search us, we pray thee, and know the real state of our hearts. Lord God we tremble at the idea of thy scrutiny. Oh may we not have made that the condition of thy forgiveness, which will call down thy vengeance upon us, rather than thy mercy. From a consciousness of our past frailties and imperfections, we look forwards into futurity with fear and with diffidence.

We apply to thee, who alone art able to keep us from falling, for assistance, and support.

Guard us, we pray thee, from the various dangers to which, in what lies before us, in this vale of tears, we are about to be subjected. Lead us not into temptation; or if we must be tried, deliver us from the evil.

Give us that superiority over the world, that will secure us the applauses of conscience, the respect of our fellow creatures, and the esteem and approbation of thee, the judge of the world.

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May we, henceforth, go on our way rejoicing: rejoicing in our victory over the flesh and the spirit.

Now unto thee, the Majesty of the universe, whose dominion ruleth over all: to thee, the Omnipotent Jehovah, from whom all energy is derived: to thee, the Lord and Creator of nature, the only just object of praise, be the kingdom, the power, and the glory, through Christ, for ever, and ever. Amen.

P R A Y E R II.

Almighty Maker of the Universe! Thou art, and wert, and art to come. God, supreme and eternal; by whom all things were created; on whom all things depend; and to whom all dominion is justly attributed.

We, who owe *existence* to thy creative power, and *continuance* in being to thy superintending providence, would wish, at this time, to bow down before thee, suitably impressed with the relation we stand in unto thee; and devoutly disposed to reverence, and worship thee, with the homage that thou so justly meritest at our hands.

Thou alone, whose presence is in every part of this wide universe; whose glory and whose majesty appear conspicuous in all the grandeur of nature, art worthy of the praises and the adorations of thy rational offspring.

Thou alone, whose goodness diffuses happiness over all the boundless creation; whose munificence cheers and gladdens the whole face of nature; whose liberal hand satisfieth the desires of every living thing, art worthy of the acknowledgments and the affection of thy children and dependents.

Where, oh God! in heaven, or on earth, can thy equal be found? Among the gods, there is certainly none who can be compared unto thee.

Thou alone, art he, to whom our allegiance and our gratitude are due.

Thou art the king over all the earth, and we, of a truth, are thy servants and subjects.

We would now approach thee with every sentiment of humility and veneration.

We would now, in the sight of men, and in the face of day, thus publicly prostrate ourselves at the footstool

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of thy throne, magnifying thy name, and spreading abroad the wonders of thine energy.

We feel in every attempt to worship and to adore thee, the weakness and frailties of our nature. Who can shew forth all thy praise? Thou chargest even thine angels with folly. But thou knowest the extent of our abilities: thou art fully acquainted with the whole of what we are enabled to do. The service of sincerity will be acceptable unto thee, though the imperfections of humanity are conspicuous in the whole of our deportment in thy presence.

We look up unto thee, Great Almighty God! as to him who gave existence to this world, which we inhabit, and to the thousand times ten thousands more, which the wide universe contains.

With what astonishment are we struck; what impressions of awful veneration do we experience, when we look around us on all the mighty wonders which thine energy has wrought; on the heavens which thy spirit hath garnished with stars; on the earth which thou hast hung upon nothing; on the great and wide seas, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great!

Of a truth, thou art that great, that mighty God, who, by a word, calledst forth order out of confusion, beauty out of deformity, light out of darkness, life out of death, and every thing out of nothing.

Where art thou not visible?

Where is not thy glory resplendent?

What portion of existence proclaimeth not abroad thy praise?

Who shall not fear, who shall not worship, who shall not glorify thee, whose greatness immensity comprehends not, and the effects of whose power no mortal can ever find out unto perfection?

But from thus contemplating thee as the greatest and most glorious of Beings, let us now turn to the still more pleasing duty of adoring thee, as the best and most amiable of Beings.

Were it, indeed, that we had reason to consider thee only as a God possessing an immensity of power, we should tremble whenever the thought of thy presence occupied

occupied our minds. We should, when bowing down before thee, experience all the feelings of the most awful apprehension, instead of those transporting emotions with which thy character, as the God of love and the father of mercies, now animates us to worship and adore thee.

Looking up to thee, in this view of thy character, we feel all the confidence of children in the presence of a parent. Our awe is softened into complacency, and our fear is changed into affection.

We rejoice to consider thee as the source of happiness and comfort : as making the grand awful attributes of thy nature, the instruments of thy mercy and loving kindness.

What thousands, nay, what ten thousand times ten thousand myriads of animated beings, hast thou not called forth to life, to enjoyment?

Unrestrained by any partiality, and uninfluenced by anything, save the dictates of the most perfect benevolence ; there is not an existing creature from him, who is the chief of the ways of God, to the sparrow that falleth not to the ground, without thy cognizance, but has reason to bless and to thank thee.

Thine eyes are over the whole earth and heavens for good. Thy bounty is not confined to space. Thy munificence knoweth no bounds. It is higher than the heavens, deeper than the sea, and wider than immensity.

All nature glories in thy goodness. All creatures rational and irrational rejoice amidst thy bounty. One universal hymn, from brutes and men, from angels and archangels, rises on the breath of gratitude to thee, who sittest between the cherubims.

But while, gracious Being! we pray, that we may not be undistinguished amidst the general joy which thy creatures are continually expressing ; permit us to hope, that this our particular art of homage and of gratitude, for thy numerous and special gifts to the human race, may be acceptable in thy sight.

What have we, that we owe not unto thee?

Thy mercies have been more numerous to us, than the sand upon the sea shore : they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee.

Thou hast dignified our existence in a manner most beneficent to us, and most glorious to thee.

In our external form, thou hast made the most wonderful symmetry apparent. In our internal structure and composition, thou hast combined the most exquisite machinery. In our powers of fancy and of memory; in our faculties of reason and conscience; thy munificent hand and distinguishing love are still more conspicuous: By these, thou hast made us like unto gods, knowing good and evil.

But not to our *formation* alone, is thy goodness confined; in our *preservation* and in *all* the *blessings* of this life, we have reason to *adore* thee, as the most beneficent of Beings, and to praise thee as the most bountiful of benefactors.

In the hour of danger, thou hast been our guardian and protector. At the time, when vain was the help of man, thy consolations have attended us; thou hast stretched forth thine arm, and rescued us from destruction.

In the moment of want, thou hast literally supplied us; thou hast opened thine hand, and satisfied all our most pressing desires.

To thee, we owe, whatever of health and prosperity; whatever of peace and liberty; whatever comforts of a domestic or social nature; whatever benefits as rational and moral agents, are our portion upon earth.

Thou art the father of these, and of all the other mercies we enjoy.

There is not a day, or an hour of our existence, but what calls for an acknowledgment of thy munificence.

It is then, Great and Merciful God! with much sorrow and regret, that we reflect upon what has been the past conduct of our lives.

We acknowledge, with shame and remorse we acknowledge, that we have not been duly attentive to the discharge of the debt, the infinite debt to which thy unbounded mercy has subjected us.

We are fully sensible of our entire inability to make thee any thing like an adequate return for the bounties we have received.

We

We are well convinced from what thou hast revealed to us of thyself, that this is what thou neither expectest, nor requirest at our hands.

But we have been negligent in paying unto thee that tribute of duty, affection, and gratitude, to which our abilities are competent.

We have not felt towards thee those emotions which beings, blessed as thou hast blessed us, ought to have felt for such a benefactor.

We have not experienced that reverential sense of thy character and presence, which creatures, in a situation such as ours, ought to experience, whenever they think of the Lord of nature, and the God of the universe.

We have not made the acquisition of thy favour, which ought to have been considered by us as better than life, the great end and aim of all our most strenuous efforts.

We have not sought thy will, as our meat and drink. We have not rejoiced to keep thy commandments. We have not delighted our souls with thy statutes.

But there is mercy with thee that thou shouldest be feared: with thee there is plenteous redemption. Thou knowest our frame, thou considerest we are but dust. We feel a confidence in the character in which thou hast declared thyself to us, as a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

We pray thee to look down upon us with an eye of pity.

Let our expressions of penitence arise up as incense before thee.

Let the sorrow, the unfeigned sorrow which we now feel, appease thine anger, and soften thy resentment.

Oh God! how greatly do we lament the frailties and the imperfections to which we have been subject! With what serious regret do we reflect on our having so often done the evil which we would not, while we have omitted the good which we would have performed!

We are, indeed, shocked at the remembrance of what has been our conduct in a variety of instances.

We are impressed with an abhorrence of the offences we have committed.

We feel ourselves inspired with the warmest and sincerest

cerest resolutions of acting a different part during the remainder of our lives.

But conscious of what we have been, we are diffident respecting what we shall be.

Oh strengthen us, we beseech thee, with thy might.

Commit us not to ourselves. Give us not over to a reprobate mind. Never leave us, never forsake us.

Henceforth, may we never do amiss; but armed with the breast plate of faith, may we bid defiance to what the world holds forth to us of danger.

Henceforth, may we walk worthy of the distinguishing blessings we enjoy; adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Henceforth, may his spirit be our spirit; the great object of his life, the one main end of ours; and the hope to which he looked forward, and by which he was animated to endure the cross, and to despise the shame, be the one great motive of all our conduct, inspiring us with the noblest ambition, and enabling us to shew ourselves superior to all the worst evils of this transitory state.

Thus, oh God! roused by the sufferings consequent upon sin; *charmed* by the beauty of holiness and virtue; *encouraged* by the rewards of the gospel; and *assisted* by the spirit of grace; may we, henceforth, act well the part becoming our situation and privileges; enjoying all the best comforts resulting from the practice of goodness in this life, and cheered with the expectation of that still more glorious happiness in the world to come, which thou hast promised shall be the portion of all who diligently love and serve thee. Through Christ, &c. Amen

P R A Y E R III.

OH, thou, the greatest and most venerable of Beings,
who art without beginning of days or end of
years!

Thou reignest through eternity, the vast Majesty of
the universe!

Thou art the same for ever and ever, unchangeable
in all thy perfections.

Thou art of transcendent greatness, which no mortal
power can find out by searching.

In comparison with thee, all nature is as nothing.

The mighty waters which strike *us* with such senti-
ments of awe and grandeur, are to thee but as the drop
in the bucket.

The wide expanded heavens which we regard with so
much wonder and admiration, are to thee but as an
hand-breadth.

This earth which we inhabit, whose mountains and
whose hills are to us objects of such surprize and asto-
nishment, thou takest up as a very little thing.

Thou art God, omnipotent, supreme, and eternal.

All existence owes its origin to thee.

At thy voice chaos was no more. Beauty, order, har-
mony, and happiness, arose at thy command.

Thou art every where present, amidst all the boundless
effects of thine unlimited energy.

In the highest heavens is thy habitation. In incon-
ceivable depths thou art known to reside. On our right
hand, beyond our sight, or conception, thou existest.
On our left, in immeasurable distance, thou art still to
be found.

Thou

Thou art encircled with light, in the refulgence of which no finite power can exist.

Thou sittest upon a throne upheld by justice, and supported by judgment.

Thy ministers are faithfulness and truth. The possibility of censure or defect reaches not to any of thy commands or decrees.

All the operations of thine energy are directed by that perfection of wisdom, which thou possessedst in the beginning, when there were no depths; when there were no fountains abounding with water; when the mountains were not settled: when the hills were not brought forth; when as yet thou hadst not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the world.

Oh, how infinitely great and powerful; how transcendently just and wise art thou!

Nor are these the whole of thy wonderful attributes: thy goodness is no less conspicuous a perfection in thy nature, than these more awful attributes of thy character.

We cannot look around us without being struck with proofs of thy munificence.

If we consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, we behold the sun ruling by day, dispensing abroad his light and his heat; and the moon and stars ruling by night, cheering the inhabitants of the world, 'till the day-spring visits them again.

If we contemplate this globe on which we dwell, no tongue can utter all the praises thy bounties justly claim.

Thine original stamp, which when thou first calledst forth creation into existence, thou didst place on all things, as they were successively formed, still remains un-effaced on all thy glorious works.

Good is still every fish of the sea. *Good* is every fowl of the air. *Good* is every living thing that moveth upon the earth; every herb bearing seed; every tree bringing forth fruit after its kind.

Permit us then, whom, though last in the order of creation thou hast made the first in faculties and distinctions, to laud and magnify thy name; to bless thy goodness and loving kindness to us, and to all who are alike exalted of thy mercy.

We

We would thank thee, great father of men, for forming us after the resemblance of thyself; for raising us so high in the scale of existence; and for making us the lords and proprietors of this lower world.

We would thank thee, that thou hast elevated us to dominion by the enlargement of the faculties of our minds, and not by those of our bodies; that thou hast gifted us with an understanding heart, and hast made us capable of high degrees of improvement in wisdom and knowledge.

We would thank thee, that thou hast not made us careless and independent of each other, but that thou hast filled us with every social and sympathetic feeling; that thou hast disposed us to rejoice with those that rejoice, to weep with those that weep; that thou hast inclined us to enter into the dearest connections of life, and made us to look for the most exquisite enjoyments of our being, in the discharge of the duties of friendship, and in a compliance with the demands of affection.

We would thank thee, that thou hast not made us merely for a day; that this short existence is not all that we have to expect; that we are not as the brutes that perish; but that thou hast so ordained our lot, that though we die, we shall again be quickened; that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this our mortal shall put on immortality.

We would thank thee, that it is not merely of the tree of life of which thou hast thus given us to taste, but that of the tree of knowledge thou hast likewise permitted us to eat: that as thou hast made us for an eternal existence, thou hast given us all the necessary means to render us meet to be partakers of it.

We would thank thee, for the wise, kind, and consistent system of laws, which thou hast framed for our government; that thou hast made the means of our securing the happiness of thine eternal kingdom, the truest source to us of the best enjoyment of this world's good.

But while we thus recognize thy praise in the original gifts of thy goodness, we would magnify that superintending providence with which thou hast watched over us ever since we came into being.

N

We

We would adore and thank thee, that thou hast been our shepherd; that thou hast led us by the side of still waters; that thou hast blessed us with the riches of thy bounty; that thou hast hidden us under the secret of thy presence, in the day when oppression has threatened us; that thou hast been nigh unto us when affliction hath visited our dwelling; that thou hast ever been our friend, and that thy consolations have attended us when men have risen up against us.

In ten thousand instances, Oh God, may we justly say, hadst not thou been on our side, we should have sunk under the evil that beset us; we should have been swallowed up quickly, the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our souls.

But not as the creator nor as the preserver of men would we alone praise thee; we would proceed still further to bless thee, as the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We would here call upon our best faculties:

We would here invoke all our highest powers: we would here worship thee with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our souls, and with all our strength.

Well art thou defined, by thy Scriptures of truth, as being love, and as dwelling in love.

Thy Son, thy own well beloved Son, thou didst not spare.

Thou has sent him into the world to raise us from ignorance and error, to knowledge and truth; from despair and from bondage, to hope and to freedom; from death and from sin, to life and to righteousness.

Oh, how worthy art thou to receive blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever!

But although thy mercy and loving kindness have been thus conspicuous to the race of men, how deficient have they been in the return of that duty which thy goodness merits.

Were it not that thou hast declared thyself to be a placable and forgiving Being; to be like a father pitying the offences of his children, we should not dare, whenever we thought of the various instances of our misconduct, to hold up our heads in thy presence.

We

We have, indeed, sinned against thee, oh, thou preserver of men!

Infinitely excellent as thou art, we have been utterly insensible of thy perfections.

We have not gratefully rejoiced amidst the wonders of thy goodness. It has not been our pleasure to contemplate and adore the displays of thy munificence. Though blessed in a manner far above our highest deserts, we have been deficient even in the feelings of thankfulness and praise. We have, indeed, in almost every instance in life, and in almost every portion of our being, acted unworthy of the privileges we enjoy, and inconsistent with the nature of the distinctions with which we are favoured.

But we are now heartily sorry for our misconduct. We repent of all our misdoings. We reflect with much regret upon what we have been: miserable offenders!

Be merciful unto us, we pray thee, in thy judgments. May not the wages of our sins be to us death. Cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. Quicken us again to a newness of life. Turn thou us, Oh God, and so shall we be turned. Direct us, by thy wisdom, so that henceforth we may never err. Give us duly to improve the various talents thou committest to our trust. May we make a suitable use of the treasures of thy word. May the precepts of the gospel, and the examples of its worthies; more especially that of the great Captain of our salvation, henceforth be as a light to our feet, and as a lamp to our paths.

Blessed as we are with Christian knowledge, grant unto us, we pray thee, Christian tempers.

May that charity that thinketh no evil; that checks the impetuosity of anger; that is a stranger to the uneasy feelings of envy; that is meek and humble in its deportment; that is above every thing sordid and selfish, ever warm and animate the hearts of the disciples of thy Son.

May that submissive spirit of our Master, who reined not, though he had no where to lay his head; who considered it as his meat and his drink to execute

the commands of his God; who bowed down to the worst of sufferings, and braved the horrors of the most cruel and ignominious of deaths, in compliance with the appointment of Providence, for ever appear prevalent in the conduct of us, his servants and followers.

Oh, as we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so may we walk in him. May we have our conversation, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

We pray thee, strengthen our conviction of the pernicious effects and dangerous tendency of vice. Give us a still more lively sense of the beauty and happy fruits of holiness and virtue. May we be dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness. May we constantly remember, that we are candidates for immortality: that this is the great object which thou holdest out as the prize of our calling; that this is what, forgetting the things that are behind, we should press forwards after, as the thing that is before; and that the rendering ourselves fit for entering upon this, ought, above every thing else, to be the end and the aim of all our most strenuous efforts.

These our expressions of praise; our effusions of gratitude; our declarations of penitence; and our petitions for mercies, we would hope thou wouldst hear, in heaven thy dwelling place, and hearing, accept, and send us an answer of peace.

Through Christ, &c. Amen.

P R A Y E R IV.

O H Thou, in whose sight the very heavens are not clean ; who chargest even thine angels with folly. We, the children of the dust, and the creatures of imperfection, would, with the profoundest abasement, and with the most awful veneration of thy transcendent attributes, present ourselves at the footstool of thy throne.

We are encouraged thus to approach thee, by the conviction with which thou hast impressed us of thy merciful condescension.

Thou art ever more ready to hear, than we are to pray. We would wish, at this time, that the language of our lips, and the dictates of our hearts, may be such as thou mayest regard with pleasure.

We would wish, so wholly to be engrossed with the idea of thy great and universal sovereignty ; that the most devout fears may occupy our thoughts, and the most submissive reverence mark our deportment in thy presence.

By ties the most sacred, we are bound to worship and adore thee ; and it is *one* of our *distinctions*, that we are *capable* of praising thee. Thou hast made us, as it were, the priests of nature.

It is a source of the most exalted enjoyment to us, to draw nigh unto thee, in act of homage ; to pour out our souls before thee ; and to hold sweet converse with thee, in thine house of prayer. Oh Lord, look down from heaven, this day, and bless thy worshipping servants now prostrate in thy presence. Oh, while we muse, may the fire of true piety burn, and so may we speak with our tongues !

We venerate thee, as that great underived Being, who
from

from eternity to eternity, existest, boundless in perfection, and utterly above all influence or controul.

In vain do even angelic natures attempt to comprehend the unsearchable immensity of thy wonderful attributes.

Thou art higher than the highest; invisible to the most exalted of the creatures thou hast made, and utterly inconceivable to the utmost exertion of their thoughts.

There is no power, in heaven or on earth, that can stay thine hand, or say unto thee what doest thou? Thou art perfectly resistless in the execution of thy mighty will.

Thou hast exerted thine energy from the beginning of time. The wonders of thine Omnipotence are beyond all bounds or limitations. When we think of them, we are lost in awful astonishment.

There is no portion of thy immense universe where thou dost not reside: nay, beyond the circle of creation thou existest. In thine own unfathomed essence, thou reignest where thou thyself art, all in all. Every thing we see is the work of thine hands. There is nothing that surprizes, that elevates, or that delights us, but what testifies thee for its former. There is nothing of all the glorious objects of this fair world, which does not call upon us to adore and worship thee, as its creator. The sun shines but to thy praise. The moon and the stars revolve but to thy glory. The earth, and the seas, and every thing which they contain, but manifest thy perfections.

Thou art the Lord of Providence. Thou presidest at the head of the universe. Thou sustainest the chain of the world. All nature hangs pendent from thy footstool.

Thou art the wise and righteous governor of all the creatures thou hast made.

Holiness and purity are essential to thy nature. Thou art infinitely excellent in every attribute that can denote perfection.

Thou alone art worthy of the prostrations of created Beings. Thou alone art worthy to be addressed with prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.

Great God! we would wish now to praise thee, as the source whence we came into existence; whence all the blessings of this existence flowed; and whence our continuance in being can alone have been derived.

Nor

Nor is this all : We would wish to praise thee as the source of still greater mercies than these.

We would wish to praise thee, as the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; as not only possessing immortality thyself, but as desirous that thy creatures of mankind should likewise be immortal ; as sending thy own well-beloved Son to redeem us, thy degenerate race, from sin and the grave ; to raise us from the pit of perdition, to the highest and most exalted of hopes ; and to fit us, here, by a system of the most perfect laws, for the participation, and the enjoyment, hereafter, of thy most perfect kingdom.

Let nature praise its Creator : let existence glorify its Preserver : but let man adore his Redeemer.

Let him, with every faculty he has, bow before the God who has cleansed him from sin ; who has saved him from death ; who has rescued him from hell ; who has raised him to heaven.

Oh, impress deep in our heart the present emotions which we feel. Oh grant, that we may never one moment, in the remainder of our lives, live unaffected with the sense of thy being and presence.

But oh, thou pure and holy God, how are we shocked with a reflection upon our past conduct ! When we consider what a Being thou art, with whom we have to do ; what a system of laws that is, by which our actions will be tried ; what a force, and a power in those obligations which we have broken through and disregarded ! We confess that we have forfeited every claim to thy favour. We have no right, no pretensions to address thee as our father.

We have not only violated thy most express commands, but in our compliances with thy numerous injunctions, such a coldness, languor, and indifference have prevailed, that they have proved but as sacrifices which thy soul has abhorred.

In spite of the remonstrances of conscience ; in spite of the clear manifestations thou hast made of thyself ; in spite of our characters as Christians, and our hopes as candidates for an immortality, we have done the things which we ought not to have done.

Despair

Despair would swallow up our soul, but for the declarations thou hast given us of thy placability.

Oh God, we have no source of hope, if thou art exact to mark our iniquity.

Wert thou a strict and inexorable judge, we would not plead with thee. We would silently submit to our fate; or curse thee and die.

But blessed, for ever blessed be thou; judgment is thy strange work: the Lord merciful and gracious, is thy character. For thy name's sake, then, pardon and forgive thy repentant children. Save us, we pray thee, from that everlasting destruction which thou hast threatened to the impenitent. Grant us not to be found amongst those who shall be banished from thy presence. Afflict us not our portion with the hypocrite and unbeliever, amidst weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Oh, thou, who alone art able to keep us from falling, we would now earnestly intreat of thee, that henceforth our conduct may be more suitable to our characters, and more worthy of thine approbation and favour.

May we be induced, from reflecting on the dangerous and pernicious tendency of vice, to avoid it for the future, as the worst enemy to our happiness here, and as the sure earnest of our greatest misery hereafter.

May we look well to ourselves; may we search and probe all our most secret and presumptuous sins; may we, aided by thy spirit of grace, make clean our hearts and renew within us right dispositions.

Enlighten us, we beseech thee, with thy wisdom from above. Grant us to conceive, in a still more exalted manner than we have hitherto done, of thy nature, perfections, and providence.

Lead us into all truth, respecting thyself; and guard us from the pernicious errors with which the world so much abounds.

May we look up unto thee, not merely as the Jehovah of Israel, nor as the God alone of these Christian kingdoms. Thou art the God of the Gentiles: thou art the father of the universe. Thou disdainest the partiality which superstition attributes to thy character. Thou art far above those narrow dictates by which bigotry represents

represents thee as actuated. Thou art no respecter of persons. In every nation he that feareth thee, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted.

Be with us, thou Great Being! while, instead of pleading before thee that we have Abram for our father, we endeavour thus to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; to make our calling and election sure, by the practice of truth and justice, honour and benevolence.

Oh, give us the true spirit of the founder of our faith: in an imitation of his virtues, and not in a reliance upon his merits, be our hope of obtaining thy favour.

Looking forwards into life, we see our paths beset with many difficulties and with many dangers.

In this imperfect state, we cannot hope to avoid the trials and the temptations common to our natures. But grant, we pray thee, that we may never of conscience make shipwreck. Though thou shouldest take away all that we have; nay, though thou shouldest put forth thine hand, and touch our bone and our flesh; may our integrity never depart from us, so long as we live.

But Lord! what are we, that thou shouldest be thus mindful of us? We come up, and are cut down like a flower. Oh, prepare us for the change that is awaiting us. Give us, we intreat thee, that peace of thine which will cheer us in our latest hour; which will whisper comfort to us amidst our dying groans; which will enable us, in the struggles of death, to see heaven opened, and encourage us to cry out with the confidence of the blessed Martyr, Lord Jesus receive our souls.

Well knowing that we are accountable beings; that to death judgment will succeed; Great God, may we be induced, by a serious reflection on this solemn truth, to maintain in life that conduct which is becoming Beings under the influence of so awful a conviction.

May we break off all our sins by repentance

O

May

May we be careful that our own hearts do not condemn us. May we make this the sole ground of our confidence in God. May we strive to be as useful in our day and generation, as our abilities will permit us. May we improve every talent that thou hast given us to the best advantage. May we work while it is day; waiting with humble hope for the arrival of that moment, that shall seal our labours; that shall determine the fate of our future existence; that shall place us with saints and angels, in unspeakable happiness, or with the devil and wicked spirits in unspeakable misery.

Now to thee, the Almighty Creator, the continual Preserver, and the bountiful Saviour of men, be ascribed, through the Lamb that was slain, glory, and honour, dominion, and power, now and for ever. Amen.

P R A Y E R V.

OH thou, whose greatness is unsearchable, and whose power is utterly unlimited ; whose command gave birth to universal being, and whose dominion is acknowledged in every portion of existence ! With all due humility and veneration, would we thy rational creatures now bow down unto thee, in acts of homage and adoration.

How great and wonderful are all the operations of thine hands ! How vast and various are all the effects of thine energy !

Thou hast spread out the sky, and placed the beams of its chambers in invisible space.

Thou hast formed the sun for light and for heat ; appointed the moon for times and for seasons ; and garnished the heavens with innumerable stars.

Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and stretched thy line upon it : its North thou hast extended over the empty space, and its South thou hast made for a balance.

Thou hast shut up the sea with doors, and broken up for it its decreed place ; thou hast made it the residence of things innumerable both small and great.

Thou hast established the ordinances of heaven, and maintainest the dominion thereof.

Thou knowest the way where light dwelleth ; and as for darkness thou knowest the secret thereof.

Thou commandest the morning, and causest the day spring to know his place.

Thou sendest forth lightnings, that they may go and say, here we are.

Thou thunderest with the voice of thine excellency, and we hear attentively the noise of thy voice.

Thou sustaineest the ballancings of the clouds; thou makest them to pour down water according to the vapour thereof: when thou commandest, they satisfy the desolate and waste places.

Thou sayest to the snow be thou on the earth: likewise to the small rain and to the great rain of thy strength.

Thou straightenest the breadth of waters by thy frost, and castest forth thine ice like morsels; so that no one can stand before thy cold.

Thou sealest up the hand of man, and causest the beasts to go into dens, and remain in their places.

Thou controllest the ways of all the creatures thou hast made; thou directest all their operations.

The hawk flies by thy wisdom; the eagle mounts up at thy command; and thou numberest the months that the wild goats of the forest fulfill.

Oh, Lord, how manifold are thy works! Lo, these are but part of thy ways: How small a portion is heard of them!

Behold thou art great, and we know thee not.

Touching thee, the Almighty, we cannot find thee out.

Thus impressed with the idea of thine unlimited energy, and never ceasing influence; thus contemplating thee as the universal father and Lord of all; permit us still further to recognize thy praise, as thou art manifested towards us the children of men.

We rejoice in that goodness and in that power, which, out of the dust of the earth, called us forth into life; made us the participators of social converse;
verse;

verse; formed us for wisdom and virtue; enabled us to see thee here in thy works of nature, and filled us with the hope of seeing thee hereafter, in a still more glorious manner, in thine heavenly and eternal kingdom.

We rejoice that we are the objects of thy providence and care.

Thou hast ever watched over us for good.

In the helpless season of our infant state, we have reason with gratitude to acknowledge thy merciful superintendence.

In the slippery paths of youth, thou hast delivered our souls from death, and our feet from falling.

In all times of our distress, in want, in sickness, and in temptation, thou hast ever been nigh unto us to help us.

Thou hast indeed saved, and thou hast likewise blessed us.

Thou hast made us to lie down in green pastures, and led us by the side of still waters.

Thou hast crowned our years with goodness, and made all our paths drop fatness.

Thou hast filled our houses with good things, and given us every comfort our natures could require.

And shall we not return thee this thy loving kindness? Shall we not repay thee these mercies? But how shall we accomplish what our hearts thus gratefully desire? Burnt offerings and sacrifices thou wilt not; else we would give them thee.

Alas! every beast of the forest is thine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

Thou wilt not eat the flesh of bulls; thou wilt not drink the blood of goats; and the smoke of incense is an abomination unto thee.

Wilt thou then accept of us, when we offer unto thee *but* our expressions of gratitude?

Wilt thou listen unto us, when we render unto thee *but* the sacrifice of praise?

Wilt thou be pleased, when thus we glorify thee
in

in the morning, and when thus in the evening we address unto thee our songs.

By thine own gracious command, "Offer unto me thanksgiving" we feel a confidence that thou wilt look down upon us and bless us, when we thus sincerely approach thee.

Oh aid us to execute every wish and every resolution which a sense of thy goodness now excites us to form. Great beneficiary of the world! The sun shall henceforth never arise, but our hymns shall be echoed to thine honour. The moon shall henceforth never give her light, but thy loving kindness shall be uttered. Day unto day, and night unto night, shall henceforth testify our thankfulness unto thee, who art our rock, our fortress and our deliverer; our God, our strength in whom we trust; our buckler, the horn of our salvation, and our high tower.

But let us not exhaust our expressions of praise, whilst thy best and greatest blessing, the blessing of a Redeemer still remains unrecounted.

Didst thou not cause *him*, for *us*, to leave thy realms of glory, and assume upon earth the form of a servant?

Didst thou not cause *him*, for *us*, to take up his abode in a world where he had not where to lay his head?

Didst thou not cause *him*, for *us*, to submit to the most cruel of insults; to the most lingering of torments; and to the most ignominious of deaths?

Is it possible then, for our tongues to utter, or for our words to express the gratitude with which our bosoms glow, when we thus call to mind thine amazing mercy?

Oh, no. But thou searchest the heart; thou knowest what are its real sentiments. The emotion of thankfulness, that is too big for utterance, will not be the less known, nor the less acceptable unto thee.

Behold us then, thou Great Father of him who hath redeemed us, silent in thy praise, because utterly unable to testify what we feel.

But

But oh thou great and bountiful Saviour! although we are at this moment thus alive to a sense of thy kindness; though we are now, as it were, overwhelmed with the remembrance of thy mercies; how few, alas, have been the moments, in comparison with our whole past beings, in which such a lively impression of what we owe unto thee, has had the possession of our hearts and thoughts!

What numberless days have we spent as if there were no God in the world!

How often have we rioted amidst the displays of thy munificence, and never once thought of thee, the giver of every good and perfect gift!

How often, in the very moment of our highest enjoyment, in the fullest tide of our earthly felicity, have we forgotten the hand that alone maketh us rich!

We do not then, now prostrate ourselves before thee, pleading at thy foot stool the merits of our gratitude, but deploring before thee the demerits of our ingratitude.

We do not approach thy throne, proving ourselves worthy of the continuance of thy goodness, because we have duly improved those mercies that thou hast already vouchsafed us; but, with sorrow and self-abasement, we bow down before thee, as unprofitable servants, who have too often hid their talents in a napkin.

We do not with Pharisaical presumption dare to thank thee, that we are not as other men, boasting before thee our numerous deeds, our tithes, our fastings, our alms, and our prayers; but with the conscious guilt of the publican, we smite upon our breasts, saying, God be merciful to us sinners!

Oh, give us sincerity in our thus deploring our misconduct at this time: so that when we rise from this our prostration at thy footstool, and retire to our homes, we may feel ourselves justified.

We pray most devoutly for the influence and for the

the assistance of thy gracious spirit, to co-operate with our own best endeavours after virtue and religion.

Teach us to form just and worthy notions of all the several branches of our duty.

To thee our God, may we ever be grateful, devout, and obedient.

To our fellow-creatures, may we be ever just, liberal, and beneficent.

To ourselves, may we act with wisdom and discretion, living righteously and soberly, and abstaining from all fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

May the example of him who has bought us with a price, who has given himself a ransom for those who were the captives of sin and of death, for ever engage our most careful imitation.

May we be proud to copy after him, who in all things was perfect; who was humble, though the Son of the Almighty; who was meek and patient, though the birds and beasts had much better accommodations; who was constant in his acts of worship to his father, though he lived with him before all worlds; who bore with insult and with cruelty from his merciless persecutors, though he could have commanded legions of angels to have executed his vengeance.

Oh, let we pray thee, his glorious character animate our conduct, so that *to us*, he may not be an offering on the cross in vain, but *in us* may the fruits and the effects of his death be shewn till he come: till he come in the glory of his father, with all his holy angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son.

Liabie as we are to error, it becomes us to ask wisdom of thee, who givest to all men liberally, and upbraidest not.

We acknowledge before thee our ignorance, respecting what is best for us in life.

In

In every act of our choice, in every important step which we take, oh, do thou superintend and direct us.

We hope; nay, in the full confidence of our present virtuous feelings, we *trust*, we ever shall have the wish, at least, to fulfil thy will, and to do whatsoever thou requirest.

Most earnestly then do we intreat thee to give us strength in the inward parts, that our wishes and our conduct may be the same; so that it may never more be our complaint, that the good that we would, that we do not.

Oh grant us wisely to call in all the various aids to our virtue, which thou hast graciously afforded us.

Quicken in us the hope, with which thou hast inspired us of a life after this.

Elevate our minds beyond this narrow scene of things. Grant us, to consider ourselves here as pilgrims and strangers, regarding this world as no abiding place, while we are seeking one to come.

Grant that the idea of thine Omnipresence may never be absent from our thoughts. May we reflect, that thou art on our right hand, though, we see thee not; and on our left, though, we perceive thee not.

Grant that we may ever remember that thou hast defined thyself, as a jealous God; that thou wilt not pass by any conduct of thy creatures derogatory to thy honour.

Grant that the awful and alarming threatenings which thou hast denounced against the workers of iniquity, may suitably impress our minds; make us shudder at the thought of vice, and induce us, with all possible expedition, to break off all our sins by repentance.

Thus, oh God! may we pass the time of our sojourning here, in thy fear, and love. Thus may we live with our lamps ever trimmed, in a constant state of watchfulness for the coming of him who is repre-

sented as the bridegroom, with whom those who are thus ready, shall enter into thine eternal feast, before that door is shut, at which those who are not alike prepared, shall in vain knock and cry, Lord, Lord, open unto us.

Now unto thee, who art able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the brightness of thy glory, to the only wife God our Saviour, be ascribed all honour, dominion, and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S

E R R A T A.

- Page 6, line 2, for *effort*, read *effect*.
Page 28, line 9, for *mischievous and madness*, read *mischievous
madness*.
Page 29, line the last, for *of*, read *and*.
Page 32, line 3, from the bottom, for *favour*, read *power*.
Page 40, line 20, for *repininings*, read *repinings*.
Page 43, line 18, for *bere*, read *pen*.
Page 45, line 27, for *anologically*, read *analogically*.
Page 46, line 4, for *heart-sick*, read *proliffick*.
Page 51, line 6, after *their*, insert *wild*.
Page 51, line the last, for *inconcruous*, read *incongruous*.
Page 54, line 34, for *nececessity*, read *necessity*.
Page 65, line 8, for *friends*, read *friend*.
Page 70, line 26, for *disburse*, read *dispense*.
Page 76, line 11, for *limited*, read *limited*.
Page 77, line 28, for *little*, read *ittle*.

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